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# M E M O I R S

OF THE

## LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

## ABATE METASTASIO.

IN WHICH ARE INCORPORATED,

## TRANSLATIONS

OF HIS

## PRINCIPAL LETTERS.

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BY CHARLES BURNEY, Mus. D. F. R. S.

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Omniaque ejus non solum facta, sed etiam dicta meminillerit.

Cic. Somn. Scip.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## P R E F A C E

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TO wish for information concerning such benefactors as have greatly contributed to our instruction or amusement, is a natural curiosity, which has gratitude for its basis. And the lovers of Italian Poetry, as well as vocal Music, (if I may judge of the feelings of others by my own) regard Metastasio as the primary source of their most exquisite delight in the union of those arts. But this poet has still higher claims on our reverence and affection, from his innocent life and moral character, which give a kind of dignity to innocent pleasures, and to humanity.

The life and writings of Metastasio have been so much connected with that art, upon the study and history of which, so great a portion of my own life has been spent, that his Letters seemed to furnish necessary materials to the completion of my musical annals. Indeed, if these letters had come to my hands previous to the publication of my *General History*, several points relative to the progress of the musical drama would have been illustrated from them. But, besides their intimate connection with music and its professors, I found in them so many pleasing, beautiful, and new sentiments, on other sub-

jects, written in a style so superior in elegance, grace, and facility, to any other Italian prose with which I am acquainted, that I wished to recommend them to the students and lovers of Italian literature in general, as models of familiar letters, and of easy and elegant prose.

The admirers of a foreign dramatic poet, of whose productions none have been well translated, except a few by my worthy friend, Mr. Hoole, cannot be very numerous, nor is it likely that a *general* curiosity concerning his life and writings will now be excited. However, as a POET of refined taste and sentiments, and a MAN possessed of every moral and social virtue that embellishes society, and exalts human nature, his conduct and opinions deserve display, as much as his literary abilities admiration.

The posthumous publication of his private letters, which during many years of his life had been copied previous to their departure for the place of their destination, by a young Italian settled at Vienna, as an exercise in his own language, will enable me in the course of these Memoirs to let the poet speak for himself on many subjects, concerning which it is natural for a curious reader to wish to know his genuine sentiments.

The incidents in his life, anterior to his arrival at the capital of Germany, will be given from authentic accounts, published by his countrymen in

P R E F A C E.

in Italy since his decease, and which, from their singularity, and the mystery in which they were long involved, seemed in want of indisputable vouchers to render them credible.

There are few circumstances relative to his subsequent life and writings, but what may be gathered from his works themselves, particularly his epistolary correspondence, which from a few of his private letters, that, in defiance of all his solicitude to keep from the press, the vanity of his friends had made public, were long wished for by his countrymen (a).

The history of a hero, is to be found in his *public* transactions; and that of a man of letters, in his *private* correspondence. The most authentic and satisfactory history of Cicero, is to be gathered from his *Epistole Familiares*, or private

(a) It is said in his *Elegy* by ANDREA RUBBI, of the Academy of Sciences at Mantua, written two months after the Poet's decease, and printed at Venice, that, "in his letters to his friends he disseminated that sweet urbanity which his heart never failed to furnish. Oh, what a precious gift it would be to the world, if some benefactor to mankind would publish them! Whatever is now said of his heart, would be then demonstrated. From the few that have been seen, we may imagine the rest to be replete with morality, friendship, gratitude, sound criticism, sage counsel, and religious sentiments. Where can we find in Italy a series of modern letters which would furnish such useful, such delightful lessons to inexperienced youth? We look towards them with eager expectation, and hope they will soon be in our possession."

*Elegi Italiani, Tomo 1mo.*

letters, not intended for publication ; the letters of Erasmus compose the best part of Dr. Jortin's Life of that honest and learned divine ; as the Letters of Petrarch do of his Memoirs by the Abbé de Sade ; and above all, the letters of Gray, ingeniously incorporated by his friend Mr. Mason in his Memoirs, which have always appeared to me the most agreeable species of biography that has ever been published. Dr. Johnson, in his admirable Lives of our Poets, though his opinions concerning the merit of some of them are disputed, and have never satisfied my own mind, has manifested such powers of intellect, and profound critical knowledge, as will probably settle the national opinion on many subjects of literature upon an immovable foundation. Indeed his biographical sketches are more confined to discriminative criticism on the works of our poets, than their manners and private life ; but of Metastasio, whose writings are well known to breathe the most noble sentiments, and purest morality, we wished to know how his private life corresponded with his public principles. And how could this be better discovered by a foreigner, at the distance of London from Vienna, than by his Letters ? His countrymen, the Italians, almost equally distant from his residence during more than fifty years of his existence, seem to know as little concerning his private life, as we do in England, except from his letters ; few

of

of which were published, when most of his biographers went to work.

The lives of the poet, that have been attempted, and the public orations and eulogies that were composed and pronounced upon him in the literary academies of Italy, by men of the first eminence for learning and science, before and after his decease, are innumerable. His countrymen, in possession of these, may have their curiosity sufficiently gratified; but as the present work is intended to convey to English readers some idea of the genius and moral worth of this extraordinary man, I shall give them, from his best biographers and eulogists that I have been able to procure, the most prominent features of his character, as far as they agree with what I saw and heard at Vienna, in my visits to the Imperial Laureat, and enquiries concerning him, of his friends and most intimate acquaintance.

The First biographical essay that appeared after the poet's decease, was *A Compendium of the Life of the celebrated Imperial Laureat, PIETRO METASTASIO*, written in German, for the use of his future Biographers, by JOSEPH REZER. This was published at Vienna, in 1782, in an 8vo pamphlet of only 53 pages. It was soon after translated into Italian, and published likewise in Vienna: a different translation, in Italian, appeared at Rome in 1783; and from this small tract, the principal traits of his person and character

seem to have been drawn, by his subsequent panegyrists and biographers.

II. *Elogio di PIETRO METASTASIO*, written by ANDREA RUBBI, 1782, two months after the Poet's death, and published at Venice in the 1st. vol. of *Elogj Italiani*, in 12 vols. 8vo. This is a continued rhapsody of praise and admiration, which required all the intrinsic merit, worth, and fame of Metastasio, to render palatable. The biographical information is traditional, and the annotations are so injudiciously selected, as, if authentic, to confute the chief part of his personal praise. But this writer, who repeats such wild and incredible gossiping stories concerning the poet's *prejudices*, is the greatest enthusiast for his virtues and benignity of heart, of all his panegyrists.

III. *Elogio dell' Abate PIETRO METASTASIO*, read at a general meeting of the Arcadian Academy at Rome, in August, 1782, by the Abate TARUFFI. None of the panegyrists or biographers of the poet were so well acquainted with his public works and private life as this eulogist, who had resided many years at Vienna, as Auditor and Secretary of Legation to the Pope's Nuncio, and who enjoyed the friendship of Metastasio in the most intimate and confidential manner. A man of sound learning, and unerring judgment and taste in literature and the fine arts.

IV. STORIA,

IV. **STORIA**, or History of the dramatic Poet,  
**PIETRO TRAPASSI** Abate **METASTASIO**, illustrated  
with notes, and many of his letters; written by  
Captain **MARC ANTONIO ALUIGI**. In Afisi,  
1783, 8vo. 170 pages.

This is one of the most considerable, in length, of any of the lives that have been written of our bard. The author has taken great pains in collecting all the information which he could procure from the poet's works, and from tradition; but having had no personal knowledge of him, nor ever been in the list of his correspondents, his information is neither new nor well authenticated.

V. *Elogio di PIETRO METASTASIO*, published in a work entitled *Elogj d'alcuni illustri Italiani*. Eulogies, or characters of illustrious Italians, by Monsignor **ANGELO FABBRONI**, Bishop of Pisa, 1784, 8vo. 98 pages.

This learned prelate was long in correspondence with Metastasio, and solicited his permission to write his life, and assistance in furnishing materials, previous to his decease; to which request the poet's negative will be found in the course of his Letters.

There are many just reflections and critical remarks in this *Eloge*, but the biographical part is chiefly copied from Rezer.

VI. *Vita o sia storia*, The Life or History of the Abate Peter Metastasio, Cæfarean Poet. Venice, printed by Zatta, 1784, and prefixed to the edition

edition of the Poet's works, copied from that of Paris. Anonymous. It has, however, been said by the editor of the *Nice* edition, to have been written by the late Abate GIOVAN FRANCESCO ALTANESI, in his latter days, of which he gives the following severe, but just, character. "This work is rendered insufferable by a heap of strange and inapplicable quotations, by pedantry, and by the blunders with which it abounds, copied from another life which was published by Aluigi, in 1783.

VII. *Memorie per servire alla vita*—Memoirs towards a Life of Metastasio, collected by Saverio Mattei, 8vo. Naples, 1785.

These Memoirs were published with an *Eloge* on JOMELLI, or an Essay on the progress of Theatrical Poetry and Music, by the same author. Sig. Sav. Mattei is not only possessed of deep and extensive learning, but abilities as a poet, and great knowledge and good taste in music; concerning which he seems to have heard, read, and meditated, more than any man of letters in Italy. He rather points out in this tract, in a loose and irregular way, just as recollection dictates, materials for other biographers, than attempts a regular life of his friend and correspondent Metastasio himself. However, his disjointed materials are all useful, and many of them such as are no where else to be found.

VIII. *Raggionamento*, or a Discourse by John Baptist

Baptist Moreschi, in praise of Peter Metastasio, read at a meeting of the Academy *degli Fervidi* in Bologna, 1786. This discourse, prefixed to the first volume of Metastasio's Letters, is a florid analysis of his dramas, abounding in enthusiastic encomiums, but contains no anecdotes or biographical information concerning the poet's life and manners. It is, however, not devoid of eloquence.

**IX. Vita dell' Abate PIETRO METASTASIO, scritta dell' Avvocato CARLO CRISTINI.** In this life, written by the Editor of the complete edition of all Metastasio's Works, in twenty vols. 12mo. with two volumes of Remarks and Observations on his dramatic productions, published at Nice, in 1785 and 1786, the author seems judiciously to have availed himself of the labours of all his predecessors; having compiled a life from the information obtained by the researches of others, not from a personal acquaintance or correspondence with the poet, nor any new sources of information, except what he procured at Naples from Signor Mattei. This is doubtless the most ample and satisfactory life of Metastasio which I have seen, occupying 214 pages of the first volume of the edition to which it is prefixed.

The author of this life has done me the honour to refer several times to my *German Tour*: once, indeed, to point out a mistake, which I shall here most readily acknowledge and correct.

At



At the time of my visiting Vienna, ten years before the decease of Metastasio, the history of the early part of his life was very imperfectly known ; and the *bequest of a friend* had been traditionally handed about, instead of that of the *Romanina*, which is now universally known and allowed. The story had been told me by a person of high rank, whose information, in other respects, has stood the test of the strictest examination ; but at this time, even the Abate Taruffi, Metastasio's countryman and intimate friend, was unacquainted with the Will of the *Romanina*, and seemed to credit the story which was then in circulation concerning Metastasio's generosity to the relations of a deceased friend.

At the time of Metastasio's decease, there were six capital editions of his works in the press, and innumerable have been the editions since, to most of which a life of the author is prefixed, which has been consulted, though unprofitably, in hopes of new information. Indeed my best resources of information have flowed from the posthumous publication of the five volumes of his letters, which first appeared with the complete edition of his poetical works at Nice, 1786, but without the least attention to chronology. The principal of these, however, I have arranged, translated, and interwoven in the Memoirs : making the poet, as often as

possible, speak for himself, and relate his own story.

I might add, as an advantage to myself, at least, if not to my enterprize, that I had a personal acquaintance with several of the Poet's correspondents: such as Padre Martini, Hasse, Jomelli, and Farinelli; that I am in possession of the works of most of his literary friends, to whom his letters are preserved; and was a stranger to the person or talents of but few of the opera composers or singers that are occasionally mentioned in his correspondence.

But still hoping for farther information, and unwilling to shrink from any pains, or leave untried any possible means of procuring it, I ventured to address a letter to his eleve and executrix, the accomplished *Mademoiselle Martines*, at Vienna, telling her of my design, and specifying all the materials which I had been able to collect for its accomplishment. At the same time entreating her to inform me whether it would be possible to augment them by public books or private anecdotes? And had the satisfaction of being assured by this lady (the person best qualified to answer my question) after perusing the list of books which I had procured previous to writing the life of Metastasio, that "she could recollect no others; nor could those of whom she had enquired."

"They

" They have been printing here \*, (she adds)  
" ever since the month of June, 1794, the ge-  
" nine letters of Metastasio to his friends, and  
" other particular pieces, of which I send you a  
" catalogue, and which I have ceded to a young  
" physician, Dr. *Lewis Careno* by name, an Ita-  
" lian, settled here with great reputation in  
" medicine and literature; he intends to make  
" three editions at the same time, two in the  
" form of that of Paris, 1780, and one in that  
" of Veniee of 1781.

" The first volume has left the press ever since  
" October, 1794, and the second is near finish-  
" ed; so that towards the month of April next  
(Mademoiselle Martines's letter is dated Janu-  
ary 25th 1795), " all the three volumes will  
" appear under the title of "*Opere postume dell'*  
*" Abate PIETRO METASTASIO*, Vienna, 1795."  
" In the first will be found a manuscript well  
" worthy of the author: *Osservazioni da me fatte*  
*" sulle Tragedie e Commedie Grecche*, which takes up  
" a third part of that volume; then begin the  
" selected letters. In the next volume, the let-  
" ters are continued; and the third will contain  
" letters and billets written by the late empress  
" MARIA TERESA, and little poetical pieces  
" collected from his writings. The impression  
" will be executed with the utmost elegance and  
" neatness. For your further information, I have

\* At Vienna.

" inclosed

" inclosed a copy of the Printer's advertisement.

" I would be more circumstantial to you with regard to the Bard; but that I see you are furnished with the best books concerning him, and may draw thence a deal of information. If in any thing else I may be of service to you, it will give me a true satisfaction, as it does to assure you of that real esteem with which I am, Sir,

" Your most humble servant,

" MARIANNE MARTINES."

This extract, *literally* copied from the original letter with which I have been favoured, I could not resist inserting in my Preface; not only for the information it will afford the admirers of Metastasio concerning the three additional volumes of his works, printed in 4to, 8vo, and 12mo, to suit any edition of his former writings of which they may be in possession, but as a specimen of the marvellous accuracy with which this ingenious lady is able to write in a language, which she has acquired at the distance of a thousand miles from our Island!





# M E M O I R S

OF THE

## LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE ABATE

PIETRO METASTASIO.

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### S E C T I O N I.

**P**IETRO TRAPASSO, the second son of Felice Trapasso of Asisi, and Francesca Galasti of Bologna, was born at Rome, Jan. 6th, 1698, in the parish of Santi Lorenzo & Damaso, where he was baptised the 19th of the same month, by Card. Ottoboni.

His father, though descended from a family in Asisi which had long enjoyed the privileges of free-citizens; but which, by a gradual decline, was reduced to poverty, not being able

to subsist in the place of his birth, listed for a soldier in the regiment of Corsi, and soon after married Francesca Galasti, by whom he had many children besides the Poet.

While he was in garrison, to the small pay of a soldier, he added something towards the maintenance of his family, by becoming an Amanuensis. And at length, having served the usual time, and by extreme industry and economy saved a little money, he entered into partnership with a shop-keeper at Rome, for the sale of goods which belong to what the Romans call *l'arte bianca*, consisting of oil, flower, pastry, and other culinary materials.

And having been somewhat prosperous in this kind of merchandise, he placed his two eldest sons, Leopoldo, and Pietro, at a Grammar-school. The latter discovered an extraordinary quickness and disposition for literature, and a violent passion for poetry, with a power of making verses, extempore, on any given subject, before he was ten years old.(a).

This

(a) This species of inspiration, allowed to the *improvvisatori* of Italy, was long doubted in England by those who had never crossed the Alps, till the arrival of the celebrated TALASSI in our country about ten years ago; when

This faculty he was habituated to exercise, after school hours, at his father's shop, where great crowds used to assemble in the street of an evening to hear the young Trappi sing, *all'improvista*; who, besides the harmony of his numbers, was gifted with the melody of a fine voice. During one of these tuneful *fits*, the learned civilian GRAVINA having accidentally passed that way, was struck with the sweetnes of the child's voice, and still more with his verses, which he soon found were extempore, and either upon persons who stood near him, or on playful subjects of their suggesting.

Gravina was so astonished and pleased at the precocity of the little bard's talents, that he stopt to caress, and converse with him, offering him money for his performance, which however the child modestly declined to accept. This so much increased the civilian's admiration, that he instantly conceived a wish to adopt him, for the pleasure of cultivating a soil which nature had rendered so fertile, that even the spontaneous flowers and fruits it produced were of a superior

when the most obstinate infidels were converted to the faith, and obliged to confess the reality of the art.

kind. Without hesitation he therefore applied to his parents, soliciting them to transfer to him the care of their son's education, promising to become not only his preceptor, but father.

As the child was still to remain at Rome, and no cruel preliminary was mentioned, by which his natural parents were prohibited from seeing him and cherishing reciprocal affection, *Felix* was too wise, and zealous for the welfare of his son, to refuse the proffered patronage ; and the next morning *Pietro* was conducted by his father and mother to the house of Gravina, and wholly consigned to his care and protection.

Our young bard was now, from the legitimate child of a shop-keeper, become the adopted son of a man of letters. And as his learned patron was partial to Greek literature, and wished to implant in the mind of the young Roman a respect and reverence for ancient lore, he translated his name into Greek : calling him METASTASIO, instead of *Trapassi*; as *Μεταστάσιος*, *MUTATIO*, seemed at once to express his former name of *Trapasso*, and his new situation as an adopted child.

And

And having changed his name, he undertook the more difficult task of changing, or at least, enlarging, his mental faculties, and at the same time that he was studying the learned languages, and imbuing his mind with the sciences, he wished to make him an orator rather than a poet, and determined that he should study the Law as a profession ; that, and Divinity, being the only two roads by which a man of learning could arrive at honours and dignity in Rome. Poets, indeed, were rewarded with barren praise and acclamation, but wealth and affluence were strangers to their doors.

Yet while he was obliged to read the dry books of the Law, and to hear the wrangling and jargon of the bar, his natural passion never quitted him, but

True as the needle to the Polar star  
Which nightly guides the advent'rous mariner,  
Its glowing influence pointed out the way  
Through flow'ry paths of poetry to stray.

And however he was ostensibly occupied by other studies, he found time, by stealth, to read the great models of the art, of which says an Italian writer, " he fucked the sweet, and devoured the substance." Indeed he was as much in disguise in the

robes of the Forum, as Achilles in those of a female. At the names of Homer and Ariosto, which were his favourite poets, he was unable to contain himself; and Gravina discovering, in spite of his pupil's determination to conform implicitly to his will, that this exclusive passion for poetry was insuperable, at length permitted him to read those poets which he himself thought not only the best, but the only models of perfection. At the age of fourteen, during the early period of this indulgence, Metastasio produced his Tragedy of *Giustino*, conformable to the rigour of all the rules of the ancient Greek dramatic writers, with which his learned preceptor had supplied him. But he *lisped* the *numbers* of the dry and formal scenes of this *Coup d'Essai* in a manner which he afterwards disliked in proportion to the pains he had taken to walk the stage in Greek buskins. We have his own opinion of this production in a letter written to Signor Calfabigi, in which he says: "I should have wished that none of my early productions, which favour too much of adolescence, might have appeared in the Paris edition, particularly the Tragedy of *Giustino*, written at fourteen years of

age : when the authority of my illustrious master did not suffer me to move a step from the most religious imitation of the Greeks ; and when my inexperience and want of discernment were unable to distinguish gold from lead, even in those mines themselves, of which he then began to display to me the treasures." Atto II. Sc. 4. of this Tragedy is finely written, and abounding in profound sentiments. There are choruses *à la Grec*, and airs *all' Italienne*, at the end of each act ; but of which (as there are five acts) these airs and choruses *only* could have been sung (*b*). *Cleone*, the foot-slayer, pleads his cause very ably for an advocate at fourteen, to the fair widow Asteria, Atto III. Sc. 5. The three first acts are mild and unimpassioned ; but the fourth, is all distress and agitation. An incident occurs in this act similar to that in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, where Romeo, supposing Juliet dead, drinks poison, which he has scarcely swallowed when she revives : Thus Sophia, supposing Justin to have been

(*b*) It does not appear that this Tragedy was ever performed as an Opera. The drama of the same name, set by Handel and brought out in 1737, is founded on a very different historical fact.

irrecoverably drowned, takes a fatal draught ; but is soon after informed that he is recovered.

It seems somewhat inconsistent, that Gravina, whose first impressions in favour of his young pupil were the effects of his premature genius for poetry, should check his progress in that art, in favour of another study for which he had no passion or uncommon disposition ; but thinking more of his future fortune than fame, he chained him to legislation, pandects, edicts, decrees, codes, rolls, and every species of *advocation*\* that was likely to contribute to his professional knowledge and advancement.

But after producing the Tragedy of Giustino upon Gravina's favourite Greek model, the learned civilian seems not only to have tolerated, but encouraged his pupil's adoration of the muses ; and at eighteen carried him to Naples expressly to afford him an opportunity of singing extempore with the most celebrated Improvisatori of Italy at that time. Metastasio, in a letter to Algarotti

\* Alas ! my thrice gentle Cassio,  
My *advocation* is not now in tune.

SHAKSP. OTHELLO.

written

written in 1757, gives the following account of this poetical contention. " It is your wish to have specimens of the verses which I made extempore, during my childhood; but how can I possibly gratify this wish? I do not deny but that a natural talent for harmony and the muses, was discovered in me, that was thought somewhat uncommon, and more early than usual, that is, at ten or eleven years old; that this phenomenon so dazzled my great master Gravina, that he was partial to it, and cherished me as a soil worthy of his cultivation: and that so late as the year 1716, he exhibited me to speak verses, God knows how, for the benefit of Georgio Lorentino, upon all kinds of subjects, at which time I had for competitors the illustrious Rolli, Vagnini, and the Cavalier Perfetti, men who were then arrived at full maturity, and veterans in Pindaric battles."

And it is related by his biographers, that in this very year of his age, he sung, *all' improvista*, at Naples, forty octave stanzas on a subject proposed to him by one of the audience, which was *the magnificence of princes*, and he was heard with wonder and rapture by all the learned present. They admired the fecundity of his ideas, the sublimity

blimity of his conceptions, the flights of his fancy, and the facility and neatness of his expression. Indeed he became in that city, the general and favourite subject of literary academies and assemblies of good taste and polite conversation ; where nothing was repeated but the favourite verses which he had sung extempore, and which were remembered by those who had heard them from his own mouth : on these occasions, the order, clearness, and learning, with which he treated the subjects, as well as the beauty of his verses, the sweetnes of his voice, the grace of his action, his modest deportment, and the expression of his countenance, were universally extolled. By these excellencies, joined to his fine features and great natural dignity, he became the idol of all who heard and saw him ; and the love of his preceptor, Gravina, encreased with his years, as the genius and gratitude of his pupil rendered him every day more and more satisfied with his own discernment in selecting and adopting him.

With his poetical studies Metastasio still continued to pursue those of the law, and in order to obtain a passport through the two most promising roads to preferment at Rome,

he

he cherished also a hope of rising in the church; assumed the clerical habit, and took the minor orders of priesthood; not indeed, say the Italian writers of his life, from any partiality for that profession, but by the advice of his affectionate master, as the most likely means of obtaining honour and emoluments.

At twenty years of age he had the misfortune to lose his learned preceptor and patron, Gravina, who died in 1718, aged fifty-four. It has been doubted whether this event, which his heart inclined him to regard as the greatest calamity, was not a fortunate circumstance for his fame. Metastasio, whose writings evince him to have been all tenderness, gratitude and disinterested sensibility, bewailed this misfortune with the deepest affliction; and in the Elegy called *La Strada della Gloria*, written on this occasion, and read at a full assembly of the members of the arcadian academy founded by Gravina; he gave a public testimony of his sorrow and gratitude, expressive of those noble sentiments, which he cherished and practised to the end of his life. Nor did the beneficent will of his master, diminish his grief or dry his tears, though when opened it

was

was found to have been made in 1717, and that he had appointed him his heir.

By this liberal act, he verified his promise to the parents of Metastasio, of treating him as his own child. The advantage to his talents and to the lovers of poetry, which is supposed to have been derived from this early loss of his learned tutor, was the opportunity it afforded his genius, to free itself from the trammels of Grecian rules and servile imitation. But though in his dramas he has more pathos, poetry, nature, and facility, than we are now able to find in the ancient Greek tragedians, yet his early study of them certainly elevated his ideas and style, and taught him how to shun the vulgarity and absurdities with which the early popular dramatists of most countries abound. He may be said to write with classic elegance, though he had liberated himself from classic chains.

**GRAVINA** rendered his name more celebrated by educating and forming the taste of Metastasio, than by all the productions of his own pen. This learned civilian was born in the diocese of Cosenza, in the Pontificate of Innocent XI. and was called to Rome

Rome and honoured with a professional chair, as a doctor of laws, at the University *della Sapienza*. He had many friends by whom he was sincerely loved and respected; but he had likewise many enemies, who tried to depress and mortify him in their writings. The celebrated satires of *Quintus Settanus* were all written against him, under the feigned name of *Filodemo*. They are extremely bitter; but it is imagined that Gravina brought severity upon himself, by his rough treatment of others in his critical writings, where he neither spared the ingenuous nor the learned, any more than the dull and the ignorant. His works consist of his *Poetics*, or *la Ragion Poetica*; a treatise on tragedy published by Metastasio, and four tragedies, entitled *Palamedes*, *Andromeda*, *Appius Claudius*, and *Servius Tullius*, which could not have been written by Sophocles himself in a more Grecian style. But the most celebrated of all his professional productions, is entitled *Originum Juris, libri tres*, the most learned work which has appeared on that subject, and which is still much read and studied by proficients in the law. He left behind him the character of but a moderate poet and orator, though possessed

possessed of great learning and classical knowledge. Gravina's bequest to Metastasio consisted of 15,000 Roman crowns, between three and four thousand pounds sterling in money, a sum, says his anonymous biographer, not contemptible, if he had known as well how to keep as deserve it. But the muses are no great friends to œconomy: and poet and parsimony in the vocabulary of Apollo have a very opposite signification. Besides the specie, he left him an excellent library, and a great quantity of rich furniture, with three small places, of which he had put him in possession before his decease, and a little estate in the kingdom of Naples.

Metastasio's respect and gratitude for his preceptor and benefactor, will appear in so many of the letters which will be inserted in the course of these Memoirs, that we shall only here cite from a letter to his brother Leopold, a passage in which the good sense and sound judgment, as well as affection for his mental master, appear in a strong light.

" The Abate Molinari informs me, that a pious ecclesiastic has written the life of our excellent Gravina, which he intends to publish. And I understand, that it is his inten-

intention particularly to exculpate him from the charge of irreligion, falsely ascribed to him by some of his enemies. I am extremely grateful to any one who manifests partiality for a man to whom I owe so much. But, between ourselves, I fear this zeal is now out of season. All rivalry is at an end; and the republic of letters now only remembers the fame which his learned labours have merited. So that an apology at this time would only inform the world of what at present it is wholly ignorant: that some doubts were once entertained concerning the orthodoxy of this great man. Try to get acquainted with the good ecclesiastic, and if possible to see his work. And after due praise and acknowledgements for his intentions, communicate to him, with all possible humility, my doubts of the expediency of such a publication. But do it gently: for if the author expects much applause or profit from his work, he will not easily be prevailed on to relinquish it."

Our poet is now become a free agent, master of himself, and a despotic prince over no inconsiderable fortune. His conversation and verses had too much excellence to want admirers. And his table was  
too

too well served to be in want of guests. He now wholly quitted the dry study of the law, and devoted himself and his fortune to the muses and his friends. There was no poetical assembly in which he did not read some new production : as our Garrick in the early part of his life was found wherever lovers of theatrical amusements were assembled. Stimulated by the applause which every picce universally received, Metastasio thought of nothing but how to have it renewed by another composition. The love of praise is an infirmity to which the best minds are perhaps the most subject. During this intoxication, not a thought seems to have been bestowed on his present finances or future fortune. If he reflected at all during these times of dissipation, it was on the number of his friends and admirers, and the certainty of patronage whenever he should want it. What his predecessor Petrarca has said of the temple of love, was still more applicable to that of fortune, by Metastasio.

*Errori, sogni, ed immagini finorte  
Eran d'intorno all'arco trionfale,  
E false opinioni in su le porte,  
E lubrico sferrar su p:r le scale \*.*

\* Petrar. trionf. d'Amore.

Error

Errors and Dreams and Thoughts half form'd abound,  
And crowd the baseless fabric all around ;  
While at the threshold false Opinions stand,  
And on the steps, vain Hope, with magic wand.

Those whom the poet's young imagination had dignified with the title of friends, were only indulging their love of poetry and good cheer, at his expence. Among all the lessons of literature and science, which his learned and liberal patron had taught him, he seems to have forgotten those of worldly wisdom. And in pointing out to his genius and diligence the means of meriting the property he left him, he wholly neglected to tell him how to preserve it, and that the flattery of the poor and the rich is alike selfish: the one for profit, and the other for pleasure. And indeed it is said, that during this time, among his most ardent admirers at Rome, besides those who profited from his bounty, there were many persons of the highest rank and authority, who seemed proud of being thought his patrons and protectors. But the zeal of these cooled in proportion as he became likely to want their protection; and what Pliny has said of the Cinnamon tree, seems applicable to the great

in general, *corticis, in quo summa gratia,* nothing but the bark, the mere *outside,* is of any value. For want of these instructions, his patron's legacy was soon dissipated; not in the support of vice, but mostly in munificence and good cheer. Many of his fugitive pieces were produced during this period, particularly his sonnet on the celebrated Gasparini, in 1719, (the year after his patron's death) when that elegant and pleasing composer was in the height of his favour at Rome. Many of his cantatas, canzonets, and sonnets were produced even at a more early period (*c.*).

Finding himself in two years time wholly reduced to his two small Roman places, his little Neapolitan possessions, and his library, he went to Naples with the firm resolution of seriously resuming the study of the law. Being arrived in that city 1720, he placed himself under the guidance of an advocate of the name of *Paglietti*, earnestly entreating his assistance in the study of jurisprudence, and promising on his own part, to second the in-

(c) See Hist. Mus. vol. iv.  
structions

structions which he should receive with all possible diligence and docility (*d*). *Paglietti* was one of the most eminent lawyers at that time in the city of Naples ; but so rigorous a disciplinarian, and so totally devoted to his profession, that he not only despised but absolutely hated every species of ornamental knowledge or literature. Poetry was therefore ranked by him among the most deadly sins of which an advocate could possibly be guilty. Indeed it was to him an object of such horror, that he trembled at the mere mention of it. It is natural therefore to suppose that *Paglietti*, devoid of all taste for the arts of elegance, which help to humanize and polish our savage nature, was rough, sour, and forbidding in his address and manners : he was all law, and of that severe and merciless sort, which knows not how to pardon the smallest imprudence or deviation from worldly wisdom.

(*d*) Though most of the biographers of Metastasio agree in this account of his placing himself under a celebrated advocate at Naples, in order to pursue the study of the law after the decease of Gravina ; the Poet himself, in his letters to Saverio Mattei, calls him the celebrated advocate, and afterwards counsel *Gaglianola*.

Metastasio was not ignorant of his severity and invincible hatred for poetry; but instead of looking upon it as an evil, he was the more eager to place himself under his most rigid discipline, in order to prevent a relapse into poetry, which had hitherto been to him so unprofitable a study. The reception of Metastasio by this Lycurgus, and his first lecture, were perhaps rendered more austere and acrid by the fame of his poetical talents, with which not only Naples but all Italy was already filled; but Metastasio hearing it with heroic patience, renewed his promise of unwearied application, and kept it so well during his first residence under the advocate's roof, that he began to entertain great hopes of his becoming an excellent lawyer, and treated him with as much sweetnes as his bitter nature would allow. He knew that the studies of his young disciple were frequently impeded by the visits of persons of learning and distinction, to whom his poetical abilities were well known, and who remembered him when he was brought to Naples, as an *improvvisor*, by Gravina. But now their expectations were transferred to his legal abilities, upon which,

from

from his learning and application, they had formed the highest hopes. It is certain that Metastasio at this time, exercising the greatest tyranny over his natural inclination, refrained entirely, not only from writing verses, but from speaking them extempore, in spite of all solicitation. The first breach of contract with the rugged advocate, and first seduction of the muse during his residence at Naples, was in the beginning of 1721, at the instigation of the countess of Althan, who prevailed on him to write an Epithalamium for the nuptials of her relation the marquis Pignatelli with a lady of the Pinelli family; it consists of near one hundred octave stanzas, is full of elegance, and in the highest class of poetry. The drama of *ENDYMION*, the first that he produced expressly for music, is said to have been written on the same occasion, of which the following dedicatory epistle to the countess d'Althan, dated May 30, 1721, is printed at the head of his letters. " If it is natural, most illustrious and excellent Lady, for tender fathers to regard their children with affection, as a part of themselves, and a continuation of their own existence, with how much greater reason ought intellectual parents to love the productions of

their minds, and to cultivate that celestial spark which distinguishes us from brutes, and renders us superior to all other terrestrial beings."

The rest is common flattery—declaring that if he durst, he would say the very fine things which he does say, of the lady's high rank and illustrious progenitors.

Metastasio's next infringement of the laws laid down by the advocate *Paglietti* against the wicked practice of poetry, was occasioned by an application from the Viceroy of Naples himself, that he would write a drama for music, to be performed on the birth-day of the empress Elizabeth, consort of the emperor Charles VI. who was then in possession of that kingdom. It is said that he was with difficulty prevailed upon to enter on this task, and only complied upon a promise that it should be kept a profound secret. Our bard in perpetual fear of the inexorable lawyer, was obliged to sacrifice his hours of sleep to this contraband commerce with the muses. The piece was entitled **THE GARDENS OF THE HESPERIDES**, and is one of the most beautiful of his early productions. The viceroy on receiving it

presented him with two hundred ducats, and is said by the anonymous author of his life to have received his promise of secrecy, which he kept so religiously, that neither the composer, the singers, nor the printer himself had the least suspicion who was the author. That the young Bard may have wished to lie concealed during the rehearsal and first performance of his dramatic attempt, is probable; but that he continued longer to make a mystery of the parentage of this poetical child, when it had received such unequivocal marks of public favour, is fully confuted by the first edition of this drama, which now lies before me, and to the dedication of which his name is subscribed at full length (*e*). It has been truly said, that when a falsehood has gained admission into a book, it is more likely to be copied

(*e*) As the first Edition is become very scarce, and settles several disputed points in the Life of the Lyric Bard, I shall insert the title here, ent ire.

*GLI ORTI ESPERIDI componimento drammatico da cantarsi, in occasione del felicissimo giorno natalizio della Sacra Cef. Catt. Real Maestà di Elisabetta Augusta Imperatrice regnante, per commando dell'illustre, ed Eccell<sup>e</sup>, Sig. D. Marc' Antonio Borghesi, Principe di Sulmona, Vicerè, &c. del Regno di Napoli. In Napoli, 1721, 4to. per Francesco Ricciardo.*

than confuted. And this story of Metastasio wishing to lie concealed during the performance and success of his first drama at Naples, after being hazarded by one biographer, has been taken upon trust by all subsequent writers of his life; and I should have been of the number had I not luckily met with the original printed copy. The dedication of this drama to the Vice-Queen, dated Naples, 28th of August 1721, is elegantly written, but abounds not with uncommon ideas.

" If, says he, the choice of a grand and sublime subject were sufficient to secure the success of a literary production, I should have no reason to dread the fate of this. But if it is true, that the more vast and majestic the edifice, the more solid should be the foundation, and the workmanship the more exquisite, I have the greater reason to fear that the enterprize prescribed to me, is too high for my abilities. Deign therefore, most illustrious lady, to suffer me to avail myself of the splendor of your name, to make amends for the defects of my pen. Already the care of *the Gardens of the Hesperides*, whence my work has its name, is taken from the fabulous dragon and assigned to a descendant of the glorious family of Borghese,

gheſe (*f*). And if every other reason should fail to induce your acceptance of this humble offering, it is hoped that your excellency will be propitious to my prayer, in consideration of the grandeur of the ſubject and the commands which emboldened the muſe to fo daring a flight. I might now launçh out in the praises of your excellence, and of your moſt worthy conſort, but beſides my injunc- tions to the contrary, I ſhould neither be able to ſay fo much as is universally known, nor fo little, but that your modefy would be offendèd with it. Therefore, without length- ening this address unneceſſarily, imploring for this production that patronage and par- tiality with which the author has been ho- noured by your excellency from his moſt early youth, I preſume with the moſt pro- found reſpect and reverenſe, to ſubſcribe myſelf your excellency's moſt humble, moſt devoted, and moſt obliged ſervant,

Naples, Aug. 23,  
1721.

PIETRO METASTASIO."

PORPORA had the honour of ſetting to muſic this firſt Lyric effuſion of our Bard. It on ly conſists of two acts. The principal

(*f*) "Let us, for once, (ſays the *Ab. Criſtiani*, the moſt exact and judicious of Metastasio's biographers) forgive the Poet the uſe of fo inſipid an argument."

Knee female finger was the ROMANINA, of whom we shall have frequent occasion to speak hereafter. Those of the other four singers employed, were in England during Handel's Opera Regency: *Pinacci*, *Pasi*, and *La Merigbi*. The scenes and decorations, of which three or four plates are given in this 4to edition, were extremely splendid, but not in the usual good taste of Italy in subsequent times.

The next drama that was written at the expence of his legal studies, or his moments of rest and recreation, was ANGELICA. This was printed at Naples, 1722, and set by Porpora, for the Empress's birth-day (g). The preface to this piece is printed in the first volume of the author's letters, in which he says: "The learned and excellent men, in every faculty, that abound in Naples, at present, more than in any other city in Europe,  
Tegnaro are not accustomed to demean themselves so far as to judge of works so much below their notice as this; yet as every production of art, which necessity or choice brings into the world, should be submitted to their decision,

(g) It has been said in some accounts of Metastasio's early productions, that *Farinelli's* first performance was in this Serenata, &c.

as worthy arbiters of its merit, the author is anxious to excuse, not to defend, the defects of the present drama. And indeed it would, perhaps, have been better able to defend itself, both as to the conduct of the fable and the elegance of the dialogue, had the author been allowed more time to correct and polish it, previous to its being set to music ; but the producing poetry different from that in common use ; the adopting each part to the particular talents and abilities of the performers ; and many other restraints, which are difficult to explain to those who are unaccustomed to such labours, ought in justice to exempt the author from the censure of negligence. Those, however, who generally set up for the most unerring judges of the works of others, seek for nothing but defects ; and the instant a work appears, sit in judgment over it, boldly pronouncing sentence, and exercising the wretched employment of begging praise for themselves, for denouncing the faults of others. As the author did not undertake the present work in order to acquire reputation, but in obedience to those who honoured him with their commands ; and as he luckily succeeded in

in pleasing them, he readily renounces all other claims to favour.

"The plot is taken from Ariosto, as every one must know; but for the convenience of representation, it has been altered in some parts."

The poems which he produced at Naples, were the admiration of all persons possessed of a love and taste for poetry, particularly *the Gardens of the Hesperides*; but none felt its beauties so forcibly as the BULGARELLA *dotta ROMANINA*, the greatest female singer and actress of her time; who having performed the part of Venus in that occasional drama, was so enchanted with the uncommon beauty of the poetry, that she could not rest till she had been introduced to the acquaintance of the author. Indeed, tradition says, that this drama had an effect upon the audience in general, which Naples had never before experienced. The recitative was hardly begun, when the spectators formed a more curious spectacle than the actors themselves: so great was the change in their behaviour and mode of listening that was instantly produced. Violent noise and unbridled clamour, used to reign in every part of

2nd ver

of that theatre, and could never be subdued but with great difficulty, even when some capital singer had a favourite air to perform; and it was no sooner over, than the din was renewed with such vehemence, that even the orchestra could not be heard. But now, every one delighted by the new and decorous arrangement of the scenes, original beauty and sweetness of the verse, the force of the sentiments, the texture of the parts, and all the wonders of Metastasio's dramatic poetry, was forced, almost insensibly, into profound silence and attention. The companions of Dido while Eneas was relating the tragical events which happened at the siege of Troy, could not have listened with more eagerness than the Neapolitan audience did at this representation. Universal curiosity was excited, and enquiries made, after the author, who, though a poet and fond of praise, is said to have wished to lie concealed. But the Bulgarini who was not only pleased in common with the lovers of poetry, but impressed with the most lively gratitude to the author of the *Hesperides*, for the flattering reception and unbounded applause which this piece had procured her, both as an actress and singer, was impatient to be personally acquainted

quainted with him. And having discovered that she knew one of his intimate friends, she prevailed upon him to try to bring the poet to her house. He at first resisted the solicitation; but, at length, ceasing to be inexorable, he was induced to make her a visit. The *Romanina* (as she was generally called from being a native of that city,) had no sooner seen him, than she felt an uncommon regard for him. His poetical abilities, elegance of manners, and fine countenance, together with the circumstance of his being her countryman, or rather townsman, all joined to increase her regard; while Metastasio on his part felt equally unable, with all the stoicism he could muster, to resist the desire of improving the acquaintance; and frequently returned to enjoy the pleasure of her conversation.

He had soon reason to believe, from the countenance and behaviour of *Paglietti*, that neither his theatrical production, nor the new stage acquaintance which he had made, was unknown to him. The praises he received from the *Romanina*, and all those to whom the secret had been divulged, and their pressing instances that he would continue to write, awakened his passion for poetry,

poetry, which he had flattered himself was wholly subdued. He now began to feel, that by the narrow and contracted study of the law, his genius could never expand in his own original ideas, but would be constantly tied down to those of others. His reflections upon the sordidness of sacrificing his whole life to a distasteful business, for the mere hope of acquiring wealth, (as he afterwards confessed to his confidential friends), joined to the harsh treatment of the old advocate, which became more intolerable in proportion as the assiduity of Metastasio diminished, entirely determined him to quit both him and his profession.

His female friend perceived the conflict and internal war; and in order to stimulate his courage and resolution, she and her husband invited him in the most pressing manner to reside under the same roof, and assured him that they would contribute every thing in their power, to render his life as easy and comfortable as possible. He remained several months in a state of uncertainty; but at length, determined to accept their offer, to return to poetry, and to enjoy the pleasures of society in full liberty. Yet he did not seem insensible of the apparent indecorum

and

and want of fortitude which he manifested in quitting, with such seeming levity, the pursuit of studies which had been recommended to him by his deceased patron ; nor was he quite at his ease on the side of delicacy, as to appearances ; the obligations to the *Bulgarini*, under which he was loading himself, frequently oppressed his mind. And yet so limited is our power of penetrating into future events, that the measures which he now pursued, far from impeding either his fame or fortune, were the foundations of all his subsequent celebrity. An Italian poet has well described the shortness of mental vision.

*Sebben sembra talor che torvo e iniquo  
Il volto verso noi volga la forte ;  
Ella seguendo suo costume antiquo  
A imaspettata gisja apre le porte :  
E asconde s'cchio sotto ealle obbligho  
Della felicità le vie più corte :  
Onde non sappia in mezzo ai torti, e ai guai  
L'uom ebe temer, nè ebe sperar giammai.*

"Blind to the future," while he sojourns here  
Man knows not what to hope or what to fear ;  
Amidst misfortune, sorrow, and dismay,  
Fate oft, in frowns, points out the shortest way  
To fortune, fame, and unexpected joy,  
By means which prudence trembles to employ.

Sig. Saverio Mattei relates a curious anecdote which he had from the princess Belmonte,

Belmonte, concerning the power of our young author's extemporaneous poetry, during his residence at Naples, after the decease of Gravina. The poet having a law-suit on his hands, for part of the possessions bequeathed to him in that kingdom by the Civilian, applied to this princess for her interest with the judge, (an iniquitous practice in almost every country, but England,) and she told him, if he would first make her mistress of the subject, by pleading his own cause himself, *all'improvista*, and convince her that justice was on his side, she would use her utmost influence in his favour. He at first excused himself, on account of want of practice, in a faculty which he had discontinued for many years. But the princess persisting in her wish, as the only condition on which she should interest herself in the business, he at length begun : and pleaded his cause *in a song*, with such lively and insinuating expressions, that he soon drew tears from his patroness. And while he was in the act of *incantation*, other company came in, who were equally affected by his *enchantments*. The next day, princess Belmonte applied to the judge, begged, prayed, and related, not only the merits of

the cause, but the extraordinary talents of her client; intreating him to be present at a similar exhibition. A day being fixed, and Metastasio desired to repeat his pleadings to a new audience in the princess's palace, he consented; and without repeating a single verse of what he had sung before, such were the fire, elegance, and touching enthusiasm of his numbers, as left not a dry eye in the room. The cause was soon after juridically determined in his favour.

We will suppose from the innate probity and honour of Metastasio, that he had justice as well as poetry on his side; but when eloquence, or a siren voice is employed to confound right and wrong, FACTS, which should alone determine legal right, are so concealed, disguised, and perverted, that justice, which should be not only *blind* but *deaf* to all but facts, is totally banished the court.

The *Bulgarini* was engaged to sing in the theatre of Naples, during the carnival of 1724; and being very ambitious of appearing to as much advantage in the next opera as she had done in that for the birth-day of the empress, she pressed the poet to write a drama, in which, as first woman, such a character

character might fall to her share, as would give her an opportunity of displaying all her powers, both as an actress and singer. It is easy to imagine with what zeal the Abate went to work, in order to gratify her wish. After many heroines had passed in review, DIDO was at length chosen, and the drama entitled DIDONE ABBANDONATA produced; in which he chose the period of the hero, Æneas, quitting the Carthaginian queen: as it furnished scenes of the greatest force and passion, as well as more expression for his pen, and more abundant opportunities for the display of the Romanina's abilities, than any other. This was the first perfect musical drama, perhaps, that ever graced the Italian stage. The applause it obtained, was equal to that of the *Orti Esperidi*; and though the story was so well known, that no effects could be produced by surprise, yet the pleasure of the audience was excessive (*b*). The different editions circulated in a short time, were innumerable; and the Italians, proud of the resurrection of their drama, began to challenge all the rest of Europe, where their theatrical productions were thought superior,

(*b*) This opera was set by *Sarro*, and the part of Æneas performed by *Nicolini*.

to shew any one, originally written for music, equally perfect. The learned Saverio Mattei, who is a very judicious musical critic, in his eulogium on *Iomelli*, in which he has inserted a short account of the progress of theatrical poetry and music, says, that "the Romanina was a great actress, and that Metastasio himself was obliged to her for suggesting to him the finest situations in his Op. of *Didone*; such as the 14th and 15th scenes of the second act, which were entirely of her invention, as the princess Belmonte had frequently told him." Opera annals, perhaps, can furnish no other instance of a female singer, qualified to instruct a poet, except the Mingotti; who had studied stage effects as well as harmony, sufficiently to enlighten the author of the words she sung, as well as the composer of the music.

From the great and sudden celebrity of *Didone*, which immediately after its first appearance at Naples, was set by the best composers of the time for the other principal theatres of Italy; the Venetian minister at Rome, where it had been performed to Sarro's music, was instigated to apply to Metastasio to write the opera of SIROE, which

which he sent to Venice, where it met with a success equal to that of Dido, to the great emolument of the author, who was magnificently rewarded for the superior excellence of his poetry. This drama was set by Vinci at Venice, and performed and printed in 1726.

It appears from the original *libretti*, or printed books of the words, all which I have been so lucky as to procure, that the Romanina not only performed the principal female part in Metastasio's four first dramas at Naples, but that she performed with the celebrated Nicolini in *Didone*, and *Siroe*, at Venice, when they were first represented there in 1725, and 1726; and according to Quadrio, (i) Metastasio was himself in that city at this time; as, prefixed to the Venetian edition of *Didone* in 1725, there is a sonnet signed by the poet, and addressed to the ladies of Venice. It was during this period, that he altered, for the same performers, the old opera of *SIFACE*, at the request of Porpora.

The Romanina, probably, was not very young at this time, as in 1709, and 1712,

(i) *Storia d'ogni poesia.*

she had arrived at the summit of her profession at Genoa, where, according to the printed books of the words, she performed the first woman's part; and it does not appear, that she ever sung on the stage after she quitted Venice, in 1726.

Didone, which had produced our poet, at Naples, another sum of two hundred ducats, was thought a much less considerable advantage to him, than the constant increase of the regard and affection of the Romanina: who is said to have exulted extremely, as well as her husband, in the sagacity with which they had made choice of so dear and valuable a guest.

In the carnival of 1726, while Metastasio's dramas received such unbounded applause at Venice, *Didone*, as set by Vinci, was received at Rome with acclamation. The famous ex-jesuit *Cordara*, who was there at that time, in his *elogie* of Metastasio, recited at Alexandria in 1782, describes its reception in the following manner:

" Every scene produced one continued applause. But who can describe the rapture of the pit, when the queen of Carthage disdainfully rising from the throne, represses the insolent pretensions of the king of Mau-

ritania, with the dignity of an independent princess, by the spirited air, *Son Regina, &c?* The noise seemed to shake the theatre to its foundation. I was not there myself, as my habit did not allow me to be present at such spectacles ; but I almost heard the rumour in my cell, so full was all Rome with the fame of this production."

In 1727, the Romanina having fulfilled all her theatrical engagements at Naples and elsewhere, prepared to return to Rome, yet declared at the same time; that she would never see her native city again, unless in the company of her dear friend. He remained for a while irresolute ; but, at length, the warm affection he retained for the place of his nativity, in spite of the neglect and disappointment which had driven him thence, heightened perhaps by his regard for the Bulgarini, and fortified by the desire of seeing his father, and the rest of his family, determined him to quit Naples, in company with his benefactrice ; but not before he had obtained a promise from her, that, in return for the hospitality which he had received under *her* roof at Naples, she and her family should become *his* guests, at Rome. To this proposition all parties having acceded, he

wrote to his agents, to provide a house sufficient for the two families of *Trapassi* and *Bulgarini*. And from the time of his arrival in that city, till his departure for Germany, they all lived under the same roof, and constituted one family. The Romanina, as more rich and accustomed to the management of a family, was invested with the superintendance of all household concerns ; the rest had nothing to do, but to attend their own pursuits ; while Metastasio received visits, wrote verses, improved his circumstances, and encreased his celebrity.

The first drama which he produced, expressly for Rome, was **CATONE IN UTICA**, which was set by **VINCI** and performed in that city, 1728, and in 1729, at Venice, to the music of **LEO**. He chose the subject purposely to please the Romans, supposing that he should gain both applause and gratitude, by displaying the virtue of one of their own Heroes. But as it seldom happens that a prophet or a poet (which in ancient times were united in the same person) receives due honour in his own country, particularly at Rome, which is proverbially called the residence of strangers; in spite of the excellence of this drama, which abounds with

sublime, as well as tender sentiments and delineations, of the passions of glory, ambition, anger, and love; and in which the conduct was natural, and catastrophe happy, it was instantly attacked by the satirical genius of the Romans, and the performance suspended. The frivolous scenes, and feeble poetry to which they had been long accustomed, had corrupted the taste of the Roman public in general; and except a few learned men, less invidious than the rest, who if they knew of no modern Cato, had read, at least, about the ancient, this piece was at first very coldly received; though afterwards, when their minds and tastes were enlightened and refined by other original and beautiful works of our author, this drama was treated with more justice.

The next opera which our author produced, was *Ezio*, set by *PORPORA*, in 1728, and *SEMIRAMIDE RICONOSCIUTA*, set by the same composer, 1729; but though both these dramas were received in the most favorable manner, and the praises bestowed upon the poet were unbounded, his fortune was not greatly improved by their success. Poetry has more frequently enriched the bookeller, than the author, in every country; but

but at Rome, it is a drug of less value, even to the bookseller, than elsewhere; and Metastasio's muse, however chaste, was but little better treated for not being meretricious. If Metastasio had been a mere psalmodyist, or hymnologist, his monkish rhymes might have obtained him some ecclesiastical preferment; but the poetry which he produced on pagan and secular subjects, precluded him from every avenue to the church. He was, however, far from necessitous, and with the assistance of the Romanina, whose purse was always at his service, his fortune and situation were tolerably easy. But the being sometimes obliged to avail himself of the liberality of his generous friend, was a circumstance which humbled and mortified him beyond any other. He could not bear to reflect on being a burthen to her for whom chiefly he wished to be rich, not only to exempt her from the expences which she incurred on his account, but to manifest his gratitude for the benefits she had already conferred on him.

His amiable friend tried every means in her power, to set his mind at ease, concerning his obligations to her: assuring him that he had contributed much more to her profession-  
al

al fame than it had been in her power to do to his fortune ; that she was in such circumstances as rendered the small friendly offices which she had been able to perform, more a pleasure than an inconvenience ; and pressed him, in the most urgent manner, to tranquillize his mind on that account, and to believe (which she assured him was the truth) that he was doing her the greatest favour, when he afforded her an opportunity of dividing with him her possessions.

The afflicted poet drew some comfort from these declarations, but it was of short duration. He was perpetually convinced of the ingratitude of his pretended Roman friends, and the duplicity of his protectors ; and having nourished in his soul an ardent passion for general esteem, respect, and admiration, his narrow circumstances threw him into so profound a fit of melancholy, that he became incapable of receiving consolation.

Such was his state of despondency, when, to his great astonishment, he received the following Letter from prince Pio of Savoy, Inspector of the Imperial Theatre at Vienna.

#### LETTER

## L E T T E R I.

YOUR dramas and other poetical compositions, which have acquired you such universal applause, have been so far approved by his Imperial Majesty, that he is desirous to engage you in his service, on such conditions, as shall seem most worthy of your acceptance. It will be therefore necessary for you to mention, in your answer, some specific annual appointment, which will be fixed and invariable. Sig. Apostolo Zeno desires no other colleague than yourself, not knowing at present, any one so fit to serve such an enlightened monarch. Upon your answer and requisition, will depend the remitting a sum of money necessary to defray the expences of your journey. I am happy in this opportunity of manifesting, with how much esteem and zeal, I am your sincere and affectionate servant,

Luigi Principe Pio di Savoja.

Vienna, Aug. 31, 1729.

Metastasio was infinitely more surprised and flattered, by this unsolicited and splendid offer, from finding himself recommended to the Emperor's notice, by the celebrated and learned

learned *Apostolo Zeno*, who was himself at this time laureate to the emperor Charles VI. a prince, who had long supported his Lyric Theatre with the greatest magnificence. Zeno had enjoyed his office in this court, from the year 1718, where his chief employment consisted in furnishing dramas for music, which had long been justly thought, the best of which the Italian language could boast.

And yet the offer of this employment to Metastasio, however dazzling, was not long productive of joy without deduction. The quitting Rome, for which he had always a filial fondness, as well as leaving his family, friends, and, perhaps, more than all, the Romanina, impressed his mind with a sorrowful alloy to his happiness. But he was too well read in his friend Horace not to know that,

*Nihil est ab omni  
Parte beatum.*

Upon consulting with his family, they instantly conceived such magnificent hopes of his future aggrandizement, as contributed much to their consolation at losing him; and the Romanina was so generous and disinterested, in spite of secret affliction, as to use her

her utmost eloquence in removing his doubts, and diminishing the causes of his repugnance, at quitting Rome and his friends.

After many consultations, and discussions, of the several arguments amical and inimical to the acceptance of the unexpected proposition from Vienna, the following is the answer which he sent, and which contains so many characteristic traits of modesty, propriety, and delicacy, that it deserves to be preserved, as a model of conduct under similar circumstances.

## L E T T E R II.

TO PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY.

THE haste with which I am obliged to answer the letter, that Your Excellence has deigned to write to me, will not allow time sufficient for my recovery from the surprise which the unexpected honour of his Imperial Majesty's commands must necessarily have produced; an honour to which I had never dared aspire, even in my vainest moments. The doubt of my slender abilities, would make me accept with extreme timidity the glory of serving his majesty, if his own most animating and august approbation, had not deprived me of

the

the liberty of self-diffidence. I shall therefore only wait for Your Excellency's orders, which will be executed as soon as received. Your Excellence has repeatedly prescribed to me in your letter, to mention my wish, as to an annual appointment. This law weakens my repugnance, and will be an excuse for my presumption. It is said, that the usual allowance to the poets who have been in the service of the court of Vienna, and that which Sig. Apost. Zeno receives at present, is four thousand florins per annum: so that, regulating my expectations by former usage, I shall confine them within the same limits; humbly requesting it may be remembered, that in quitting my country, I am obliged to leave a sufficiency, for the maintenance of an aged and helpless father, and for others of my numerous relations, who have no support, but the fruits arising, in Italy, from my feeble talents; I must live in the most splendid court of Europe, in such a manner, as will not disgrace the monarch whom I shall have the honour to serve; and lastly, weighing the possibility, that my abilities may fall short of expectation, and be inferior to the task with which I shall be honoured, I shall live in perpetual terrors of impending poverty

ty and paternal wants. I have thus ventured to comply with Your Excellency's injunctions; but beg that my frankness may be regarded as an act of obedience; and whatever my circumstances may be, I shall, with the utmost alacrity, execute those orders which it shall please my august patron to enjoin me. I am fully sensible how much is due to the incomparable signor Ap. Zeno; who, not content with having hitherto protected my writings, thus generously honours me with his beneficent recommendation, for which I shall retain the most lively gratitude, to the end of my existence.

I have the honour to be, &c.

Rome, Sept. 19, 1729.

The prince replied to this letter, October 28th, of the same year.

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### L E T T E R III.

#### PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY, TO METASTASIO.

IT was not possible to answer your satisfactory letter sooner, as I was absent from Vienna, on a hunting party, with the Emperor; but upon communicating your sentiments to His Majesty, I have the pleasure to assure

assure you, that he was well pleased with the propriety, prudence, and good sense, manifested in your letter, concerning your future establishment. It is true signor Apost. Zeno had a pension of four thousand florins per annum ; but this high salary was granted to him in consequence of his being Imperial *Historiographer*, as well as poet. But I have no doubt that in process of time, you will arrive at the same appointment. I assure you that the Abate Pariati had but two thousand florins *per annum*. However, in consequence of your superior merit, his Majesty has granted you three thousand florins annually, and one hundred *ungberi* to defray the expences of your journey ; for which an order is sent to the Imperial banker at Rome. I trust, therefore, that you will not disappoint the hopes I have conceived of seeing you soon at Vienna, and of assuring you in person, how much my heart inclines me to serve you with zeal and affection.

LUIGI PRINCE OF SAVOY.

Metastasio, his family, and friends, thought it right, implicitly to submit to the terms proposed in this letter, of which the only part that occasioned them any uneasiness,

was the solicitude expressed by Prince Pio, for his speedy arrival in Vienna ; which could not take place without leaving his affairs in great confusion, and failing in his engagement to furnish the Roman theatre with two new dramas for the ensuing carnival. He saw no better means of solving those difficulties, than by speaking the truth, and explaining to his illustrious correspondent the real state of his circumstances.

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## LETTER IV.

METASTASIO TO PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY.

THE three thousand florins, agreeable to the oracular decree of my august patron, need no reiterated acceptance, as I have already had the honour to assure your Excellence, that whatever should be the conditions which I was to hope for from my studies, I should not be so much my own enemy as not eagerly to embrace them. For however difficult it is to acquire self-knowledge, I am not so devoid of it as to be ignorant, that what is now granted me, springs from the pure effect of Imperial munificence; accustomed to make its estimates by its own dignity

dignity more than by the merit of others. I therefore already regard myself as the servant of His Majesty.

No time being fixed for my departure, I likewise consider that omission as another proof of Cæsarian clemency and fore-sight, in benignly considering, that in consequence of such a removal from my usual abode, all my plans, engagements, and schemes of life, must be changed, and it cannot therefore take place with a rapidity equal to my zeal. Indeed my journey would necessarily meet with some delay in arranging my family concerns, if I had no other to transact; as I have two sisters already grown up, for whom an assylum must be found; and I have likewise to dispose of some small places which have been bestowed on me, one of which requires personal attendance. I have also some engagements to fulfill with the managers of the Roman theatre, to whom I had promised two new dramas before I was encouraged to hope for the honour of such august commands. However, I flatter myself, that all my arrangements will be completed before Lent; but if my attendance should be required sooner, there is no sacri-

fice which I would not make, to manifest with how much zeal and duty I have the honour to be, &c.

Nov. 3, 1729.

This letter had all the effect he wished, and obtained him permission to remain at Rome, till he had finished the two dramas which he had engaged to write. But neither the muse, nor the arrangement of his affairs, banished from his thoughts the obligations which he thought himself under to Apostolo Zeno, to whom he addressed the following letter, two days after he had written to Prince Pio.

## L E T T E R V.

### METASTASIO TO SIG. APOSTOLO ZENO.

I DID not think it possible that your name should be intitled to a greater degree of respect and veneration, than that with which I have been impressed for it, in common with all Italy, from the time of my earliest studies; but at present, my peculiar obligations to you are of such a nature, as would render

render silence unpardonable. Indeed it is impossible for me to conceal, without ingratitude, the owing to your generosity my whole success in the world. The admiration which you have excited in me, and my eagerness for imitating your works, together with the weight of your approbation, have elevated me to the honour of serving his Imperial Majesty : hence I have the presumption to hope, that, regarding me as the work of your own hands, you will continue to protect me, as a kind of defence of your own judgment of my feeble abilities, as well as to honour me with your advice, how to avoid the rocks which I may have to encounter, in entering into the service of the greatest monarch in the world. My obligations to you, as well as the hopes of your wife and benevolent counsef, I have declared aloud to my whole country, and shall continue to declare them as long as I live ; being the only indications which I am able to give, of my unprofitable gratitude.

No particular time having been fixed for my departure, I have ventured to suppose, that it may be deferred till after Lent ; and I have fully explained to his Excellence,

Prince Pio, my motives for such delay. I must likewise beg your concurrence and support in this procrastination, to prevent any unfavourable impressions; and your best endeavours, that all things may be settled entirely to the satisfaction of my august Patron.

Rome, 5th Nov. 1729.

It may, perhaps, be necessary here to give some account of our poet's worthy predecessor, the Imperial Laureate, to whom the foregoing letter was addressed, and of whom but little is known in England.

The learned poet, critic, and antiquary, **APOSTOLO ZENO**, born 1669, and descended from an illustrious Venetian family, which had been long settled in the island of Candia, early applied himself to literature, and the study of Italian history and antiquities. In 1696, he instituted at Venice, the academy *Degli Animosi*, and was the editor of the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*, of which he published thirty volumes, between the year 1710 and 1719. His first musical drama, *L'Inganni Felici*, was set by *Carlo Fran. Polaro*, and performed at Venice, 1695. And between that time and his quitting Vienna, whither he was invited by the Emperor Charles

Charles

Charles VI. in 1718, he produced forty-six Operas, and seventeen Oratorios, besides eighteen dramas, which he wrote jointly with Pariati (*k*). His dramatic works were collected and published at Venice, 1744, in ten volumes octavo, by Count *Gozzi*. And in 1752, his letters were printed in three volumes, by *Forcellini*, in which much found learning and criticism, are manifested on various subjects. But one of the most useful of his critical labours seems to have been, his commentary on the *Bibl. dell Eloquenza Italiana di Fontanini*, which was published in 1753; with a preface by his friend *Forcellini*, chiefly dictated, however, by Zeno himself, just before his death, 1750, in the 82d year of his age.

After he was engaged as Imperial Laureate, he set out from Venice for Vienna, in July 1718; but having been overturned in a chaise, the fourth day of his journey, he had the misfortune to break his leg, and was confined at an inn in the little town of Ponticaba, near Trevisa, till September. He arrived at Vienna, the 14th of that

(*k*) See Hist. of Mus. vol. iv. p. 111. 231. 298. 533.  
E 4 month,

month, *salvo*, he says, if not *sano e gue-rrito* (*I*), after twelve days of excessive suffering on the road.

Most of the dramas, sacred and secular, which he wrote for the Imperial court, were set by *Caldara*, a grave composer and sound harmonist, to whose style Zeno seems to have been partial. But this excellent antiquary and critic, seems never to have been satisfied with his own poetical abilities. So early as the year 1722, in writing to his brother from Vienna, he says: "I find more and more every day, that I grow old, not only in body, but in mind: and that the business of writing verses, is no longer a fit employment for me (*m*)."  
And, afterwards, modestly sensible of the sterility of his compositions in Parnassus, which though they furnished *useful* productions, were not of a soil sufficiently rich to generate such gay, delicate, and beautiful flowers, as are requisite to embellish the Lyric scene, he expressed a wish that he might be allowed a partner in his labours; and was so just and liberal as to mention the young *Metastasio*, as a poet

(*I*) Safe, if not found and cured,

(*m*) *Lettera* 133. *tomo* ii. p. 263.

worthy

worthy to be honoured with the notice of his Imperial Patron (*n*).

If the musical dramas of Apostolo Zeno are compared with those of his predecessors and cotemporaries, they will be found infinitely superior to them in conduct, regularity, character, sentiment, and force. But Metastasio's refined sentiments, selection of words, and varied and melifluous measures, soon obscured the theoretic glory of Zeno; who, after the arrival of his young colleague, seems to have attempted nothing but oratorios. In 1731, he returned to

(*n*) Saverio Mattei ascribes to the *Princess di Belmonte*, *D. Anna Francesca Pinelli de Sangro*, Metastasio's invitation to Vienna. This princess, who had been the patroness of the young poet at the time he was sent into Calabria, by Gravina, to pursue his studies, preserved his life, by attentions to his health, which was then so delicate, that he was thought in a consumption; and ascribing the disorder to his too frequently and violently fatiguing his chest, in the exercise of his talent as an *Improvvisor*, obliged him to discontinue the practice. One of his first dramas, was written for the marriage of this princess at Naples. And her sister, the countess *d'Altan*, in high favour at the court of the Emperor Charles VI. at Vienna, at the instigation of the princess *di Belmonte*, recommended him to that prince, as a successor to Apostolo Zeno, and honoured him with her friendship to the end of her life,

Venice,

Venice, where he ended his days, after producing many learned and valuable works, on subjects of history, antiquities, and criticism.

Metastasio completed his two dramas of *Artaserse* & *Aleffandro nell'Indie*, for the carnival of 1730, which were both set by Leonardo Vinci, and performed at Rome before the poet's departure, with universal applause. The first of these dramas is dedicated by *Cavanna*, the manager of the opera, to the personage then styled at Rome, **GIACOMO III. Re della gran Bretagna**, and the second, to **CLEMENTINA**, his titular queen. The principal singers in both, were *Careftini*, and *Fontana, detto Farfallino*, or the little *Butterfly*.

Upon quitting Rome, Metastasio consigned into the hands of his zealous and affectionate friend, the *Romanina*, all his effects, interests, and concerns; together with the management of his family affairs. She most willingly submitting to these several tasks, as well as to the care of the produce of the little places, and sums of money, which he left behind him.

At length, he departed with a heavy heart, and a most sovereign contempt for the friend-

ship and flattering promises of the great, by whose delusions he had so long entertained hopes of preferment in his native city; whence, at last, he was driven into a kind of splendid banishment, for the rest of his life. These early disappointments, from being extremely credulous, rendered him incurably sceptical, as to all future presages of good fortune ; and the effects of hoping too much in early life, and too little after, produced, perhaps, the principal defects in his character.

END OF THE FIRST SECTION.

SECTION

## S E C T I O N    II.

METASTASIO arrived at Vienna, in July 1730. Of his reception there by Prince Pio, and at court, by his Imperial Patron, we have a curious account, in a letter written by himself, to a friend at Rome, the day after he had been presented.

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## L E T T E R    I.

## METASTASIO TO A FRIEND.

I RETURNED on Tuesday, by my Imperial master's commands to Laxemburg; I saw him at table, I dined with Prince Pio, and afterwards, at half an hour past three in the afternoon, I was admitted to an audience in form. The master of the ceremonies, by whom I was introduced, left me at the door of the state room, in which his Majesty was leaning against a table, with his hat on, and seemed to be very thoughtful and serious. I must confess to you, that though I was prepared for this ceremony, I lost my courage, when I began to reflect, that I was in

in the presence of the greatest personage upon earth, to whom it was my business to speak first: a circumstance which did not augment my fortitude. I made the three obeisances which had been previously prescribed to me: one in entering the room, one in the middle, and the last near his Majesty. After this, I knelt on one knee; but my gracious master immediately ordered me to stand up, saying, *rise, rise.* Here I uttered with a voice, I believe, not very firm, the following sentiments: "I know not whether my joy or confusion is the greatest, in throwing myself at the feet of your Imperial Majesty. It is an honour for which I have sighed from my earliest youth; and at present, I not only find myself in sight of the greatest monarch in the world, but invested with the honourable title of one of his actual servants. I am sensible of the duties of my office, and know my own insufficiency to fulfill them to my wish; but if, with the loss of my eyes I could become a Homer, I should not hesitate to submit to immediate blindness. I shall indefatigably try every means in my power to supply natural defects, by labour and study. I know, that however I may want abilities, your Majesty's clemency

clemency will operate in favour of one who so ardently wishes himself more worthy of such patronage ; but I am not without hopes, that there is a latent virtue in the title of Poet to your Imperial Majesty, that will have an influence upon my exertions."

In proportion as I advanced in my speech, I perceived the countenance of my great patron brighten up ; and when I had done, he said : " I was already well convinced of your worth ; but now I am still better informed of your good disposition, and I doubt not but you will acquit yourself in the office, to which you are appointed, in such a manner as must ensure my being pleased with you." Here he stopt to hear whether I had any other petition to make ; at which time, according to the instructions I had received, I entreated permission to kiss his hand ; he held it out to me, smiling, and condescendingly pressed mine. Encouraged by this demonstration of kindness, I then seized his Majesty's hand with both mine, and squeezing it, with transport, gave it so hearty a kiss, that my most benign master must easily discover that it came from the heart.

Vienna, July 25, 1730.

His

Metastasio's first letter to his friend the Romanina, that has been preserved, was written some months after the above; the opening of the correspondence seems to have been lost or suppressed. This begins in a formal manner, but is full of pleasantries, on the humours of the Carnival at Rome.

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## LETTER II.

TO SIGNORA MARIANNA BENTI BULGARINI,  
DETTA LA ROMANINA.

MADAM,

I RECEIVED this morning, not only the letters of the present week, but of the last, which have relieved my mind from the apprehensions and fears with which I was assailed, that some pious soul had been beforehand with me at the post-office, in order to save me the trouble of reading them. I am much obliged to you for the ample accounts you have given me of the operas and plays, and rejoice that our *Ciullo* (clown) has done himself honour. I hope that the post in which his Holiness has engaged him, will not be unprofitable. Tell me what you think of it, and give him my best wishes.

This

This is precisely the first day of masks with you, while I am freezing here. But I entertain myself in imagining how you are employed and diverted. Ah! this moment, which, according to the Romans, will be the 21st hour, the hurlyburly will begin in the *Corso*. See! the Canon *Magistris* opens his street-door. There goes the Abate *Spinola*, and here *Stanešio* and *Cavanna*. See! too, the musicians of the *Aliberti* theatre. Who is that mask that looks so hard at our window. See! he is throwing about his sugar plumbs, and cannot stand still. It is certainly the little Abate *Bizzaccari*. And he, with the long cane, who can he be, examining all the coaches, but the dainty *Piscitelli*? Ay, ay, 'tis certainly he. Look yonder! there's Count *Mazziotti* speaking Latin. There go the Courtiers too, affectedly dressed in coloured paper and cards. But who, in the name of wonder, is that strange woman? Almost all the coaches turn towards San Carlo. What have we here? A signal. Quick, quick! here comes *Bargello* and the Genoa resident. No matter; only will there be room for us all? Can you see? Extremely well. But you seem crowded. I beg your pardon; I am perfectly

at

at my ease. Look at 'em! Look at 'em! What is their number? Seven. Who goes first? *Gabrielli* on his sorrel horse; but *Colonna* has got before him. For God's sake! what have we here? A strange creature on a Barbary horse. He'll be kill'd, certainly, poor D—I! are they driving him away? No, no, it was a dog, I was mistaken.

Well, you may say what you will, but a strong imagination is a fine thing. And thus I have seen the Corso at Rome, from the Jesuits' Square in Vienna: and now, to have done with the ridiculous and burlesque, I am plagued, as usual, by my cough, without the least hope of being free from it, till we have fine weather. I have finished my Oratorio, which you will soon see at Rome, printed in some way or other (*o*). I have spoken to the Venetian Ambassador about a certain Toilette, and he was much astonished that it had not been received, as he had had advice of its being delivered. We shall see what effect this new requisition will have. From the snow and cold at Rome you may

(*o*) This was SANT' ELENA AL CALVARIO, the first sacred drama which he produced after his arrival at Vienna. It was set by Caldara, and performed in the Imperial Chapel in Passion week, 1731.

judge what we suffer here. Not a week passes that we do not hear of some poor countryman or other being frozen to death. In the city, we walk upon ice nine inches thick, blistered harder than stone. And the snow which is continually falling, is shivered and powdered so fine by the wind, that it flies like the dust in August; and yet there are stupid people going about in *Traineaux* all night. For my own security in walking, I have the soles of my shoes covered with felt, having already had a fall in the indispensable passage from my door to the coach; but in this clumsy salutation of my parent earth, the machine received no great mischief. In short, having been apprised of the lubricity of the streets, I was prepared for it. You ask my opinion of a Sonnet by *Ignatius di Bonis*, which I have never seen, and of which I am ignorant of the subject, consequently, &c. Make my reverences to the Genoa resident, with thanks for his remembrance by the secretary of his republic. Addio, happiness attend you.

N. M.

Vienna, Jan. 27, 1731.

L E T-

## LETTER III.

TO THE ROMANINA.

MADAM,

You continue to doubt of my repose, and you would not doubt without reason, if your agreeable letters had not calmed my mind so much, that, at present, little of my agitation remains; but my obligations to you are increased, in proportion to the interest which I perceive you take in my happiness. My health, though not bad, is far from good; nor can it be otherwise; for though we are now in the middle of May, it is colder than it was two months ago. But mind! and be well yourself. Monsignor Passionei, the Apostolic Nunzio to this Court, arrived on Tuesday evening, the 9th instant. He was met two miles from the city gates, by his eminence Cardinal Grimani. He is much respected here. Prince Eugene immediately visited him, and yesterday his Imperial Majesty gave him audience at Laxembourg. The Abate Pierfanti, Auditor of the Nunciature, a polite man, and of excellent morals, whom I have met with much pleasure, came

with him ; we were fellow students and cronies, and attached to literature, at the same time.

I received, four days ago, by a courier from Rome, called Dionisio, the executorial letters against Cardinal Coscia, which you sent. I am much obliged to you for them, and beg of you to continue to avail yourself of all such favourable opportunities, without the fear of my having duplicates of what you send ; as couriers seldom come hither from Rome. You will find, perhaps, by my letter, which is now on the road, that we think exactly alike, concerning the fate of the unfortunate Romoni and Sardini, which is a true applause to justice, though I shudder for the tragedy. You will find our thoughts ever the same, according to our old custom.

I am extremely glad, that the poor Abate Falconi is acquitted of the false accusations laid to his charge ; and sincerely hope that the consequences of his innocence, will be as favourable to his interests as you have predicted. Embrace and salute for me Bulga, Leopold, and all friends, and do me the justice to believe me, at all times, and on all occasions, your faithful N.

Vienna, May 12, 1731.

L. E. T-

## LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM,

You do me more honour than I deserve, in thinking my letters artfully obscure. However, your suspicions have set me upon considering what could possibly give rise to them, or be construed into mystery, in what I have said of the festival for which I am commanded to prepare a drama. I have frequently told you, that this time is appropriated to the celebration of the birth-day of my Imperial Mistress; and even if I had never mentioned it, there was no possibility of preparing for it in secret, as you know this is the first festival in the year, or if you did not know it, all Rome could inform you of the regularity of this Court, so that concealment would be useless and impossible (*p*). I did

(*p*) It seems as if the Romanina, wishing to go to Vienna as a singer at this festival, had suspected Metastasio of not speaking openly on the subject; and perhaps he was fearful of the effect which her arrival might have had upon his own reputation: as the Emperor Charles VI. was a religious prince, who greatly discouraged every appearance of indecorum.

not therefore imagine, that the subject of the piece, without the whole of the composition, could afford you any amusement. The title is *Æneas in the Elysian Fields, or The Temple of Eternity.* It was set by Fouchs. The principal action is, the accomplishment of the tender and pious wish of the hero to see his father. The speeches of those personages, whom *Æneas* met with in the Elysian Fields on this occasion, are applicable to the praises of Augusta, Cæsar, and Germany. The interlocutors are *Æneas, Deiphobe, or the Cumæan Sybil, Eternity, Virtue, Glory, Time, and the Shade of Anchises.* In the choruses are *Linus and Orpheus, with their followers.* Such is the summary of my plan; of the execution, you will be informed by others hereafter. Is it possible, that you should injure me so far, as to think it necessary to draw out a formal account of your money transactions? I believe you have spent more of your own, than of mine; and it astonishes me, that you are not in want of a supply; but it is a sure sign that your head is at home; and you want to convince me, I suppose, that your judgment is now good enough to make amends for former defects. I shall say no more on this, except, that when

when there is any fault to find, I shall be at your service, and you know I am not ceremonious. I want to know whether the room in the *Corso* is furnished, and with what materials, and of what colour. I am sorry for the failure of *Cleomene*, and hope that *Artaserse* will be more profitable to our dear Cavanna ; but for the accomplishment of this hope, I must rely on the partiality of my great country. N. M. addio (q).

Vienna, June 23, 1731.

## L E T T E R V.

TO THE SAME.

N. M.

THE seal of a cover of a letter, which I sent you some time ago, is that of the Chancellor of the state, the sanction of which was not used by chance. I am unable to define what you thought of it; but know very well, that I have no reason to repent

(q) N. M. are initials of some cabalistical words in the Poet's correspondence with his female friend: perhaps *Nostra Madona*; but he sometimes calls himself, *il vostro N.*

the having used it. I was in the utmost anxiety for the fate of *Artaserse*, not having found a syllable about it, in your letter by the last post. But to-day I hear of its success, not only from yourself, but Bulga, Leopold, and Peroni. And am extremely happy, well knowing the pleasure it will afford you all, on my account. You can answer for the patriotic gratitude which I must feel to a city like Rome, when it thus deigns to interest itself in my labours. May my productions, some time or other, justify, in the opinion of the world, its partiality !

I am assured from all quarters of the zeal and accuracy of the performers. I beg you will thank them in my name, particularly the incomparable *Scalzi*, and *Farfallino*, whom I salute and embrace (*r*). Poor Vinci ! Now that merit will be known, which during his life, was blasted by his enemies (*s*).

(*r*) This must have been the *revival* of the opera of *Artaserse* at Rome, where it was first performed in 1730, as the date of the printed copy of the words, now before me, testifies; unless it was printed previous to its performance.

(*s*) This original and admirable composer, the competitor of Porpora and Hasse, seems to have died during the long run of *Artaserse*.

What a miserable being is man! He thinks fame the only good that can render him happy; but alas! He must die ere he is allowed to enjoy it; and if he does not die, envy will make him wretched for attempting to acquire it \*. But let us have done with moralizing. I am doubly happy now, in my own health, and in that which you enjoy. Study to preserve it, as you value mine.

I now discover the worth of my dear Marianne; who in her letters, and her prudent conduct, not only pleases me at present, but gives a different face to past times. You have surpassed all my expectations. It is the fear of tripling the expence of postage, that prevents my writing to Leopold (*t*), and my dear Bulgarini (*u*). Thank the latter heartily, in my name, and take that care of him which he merits. Tell Leopold that I shall always love him, if he acts in

\* For such the frailty is of human kind,  
Men toil for fame, which no man lives to find;  
Long rip'ning under ground this *Cchina* lies:  
Fame leaves no fruit, till the vain planter dies!

*Earl of Mulgrave.*

(*t*) Metaftasio's brother. (*u*) The husband of the Romanina.

such

such a manner as to merit your esteem. To the most polite auditor, Merenda, present a thousand compliments. I am not displeased that he confides some of his secrets to you, but I should have wished him less communicative to others. And now repeating the same ardent wishes which you have made for me, I remain your N. Adieu.

Vienna, July 7, 1731.

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The first regular opera which Metastasio produced for the theatre of his Imperial patron, was **ADRIANO IN SIRIA**, set by Caldara.

Of its success, we have no account in his letters; but by the general favour of this drama in the rest of Europe, immediately after its performance at Vienna, there can be no doubt of the applause it received on its first appearance, Nov. 4, 1731. It was brought on the stage at Naples 1732, and performed at Venice 1733, to the music of Jacomelli. Metastasio's friend, signor Riva, the minister from the duke of Modena to the Imperial court, pointed out some small inaccuracies in this drama; but the author either corrected, or explained them off, in answering his letter, Sept. 20, 1732.

Of

Of the reception of DEMETRIO, his second opera for Vienna, we have an ample account written by the author himself, in the following letter to his friend, the Romanina.

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### L E T T E R VI.

N. M. I did not think I should have such good tidings to send you to-day as I am now able to do ; indeed I was entirely prepared for the contrary. Last Sunday, my opera of *Demetrio* was performed, for the first time, with such applause, that the oldest people in the country assure me, they never remember approbation so universal. The audience wept at the parting scene; to which my most august patron was not insensible. And notwithstanding the great respect for the Sovereign, in many of the recitatives, the applause of the theatre was not restrained by his presence. Those who were before my enemies, are now become my apostles. I am unable to express to you my surprise at this success, as it is a gentle and delicate opera, without those bold strokes which produce great effects ; nor did I believe it  
adapted

adapted to the national taste. But I was mistaken. Every thing demonstrated, that it was well understood by the audience, and they repeat parts of it in conversation, as if it were written in German. My master began to shew his satisfaction, from the end of the first act, and afterwards spoke it openly to all around him. The music is of the most modern kind that Caldara has composed; but all the discontented world is not to be satisfied. The scenes were beautiful. Minelli has both acted and sung better than usual, and pleases almost universally in the part of *Alceste*. Dominichino, acquitted himself in the part of *Cleonice*, with general approbation. Casati has exalted the part of *Olinto*, as Borghi has that of *Fenicio*. The Olzauferin sung, as she still looks, *beautifully*. Brown, the base, did not do half so well in the public performance, as at the rehearsals, in which, however, he did but little. And here is my whole history, which I would not have written to any one but you, as others would pronounce me to be a vain coxcomb.

Vienna, Nov. 10, 1731.

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This opera was brought out at Rome, the beginning of the next year, under the direction

rection of his female friend, to whom he sent instructions for the performance; in which, though she was not allowed to sing on the stage, she assumed the poet's part at the rehearsal.

In a letter to the Romanina on the subject, he says: " You are now in the middle of your theatrical diversions, while I am at the dry work of writing an Oratorio. Amuse yourself for me, and be assured that your pleasure contributes greatly to mine. It was my full intention to send a sheet of directions for the performance of *Demetrio*; but, in examining the opera, I find so little intricacy in it, that it would be affronting both you and myself, if I attempted to instruct you."

—He however gives in this letter two pages of directions for the representation of the opera of *Demetrio*, which would be very useful to the composer, performers, and director, in bringing that drama on the stage.

When he has finished his instructions, he says: " These were the arrangements, and I have seen the inhabitants of these northern regions weep. Do you produce the same effects.

" His Eminence the archbishop of Colonitz, in order to ascertain my existence, will see  
me

me himself, and I shall not be able to send to him till next week. There is nothing new or unexpected in the illness of the Empress's mother, so that *Iffipile* will be performed. There is a precious part in it of a pirate, which runs through the whole opera; it will be admirably performed by our dear Berenstadt, who together with our friend Rondinella, (*plump friend*) I embrace most cordially. Say the same to Bulga, to Leopold, and to yourself. By recommending to you the care of your health, I mean to recommend to you, your V. N. Adieu."

Vienna, Jan. 12, 1731.

## L E T T E R VII.

### TO THE ROMANINA.

MADAM,

N. M. You reproach me, I know not with what conscience, for the very same brevity which you yourself practice in your letters. We are either both to blame, or neither. But enough of this; for I dare not pretend that a month will pass in which I shall be exempt from reproof; I look on it as a necessary evil, like the return of a fever

to those who have a quartan ague. I am extremely concerned for the ill fate of Didone, as much on account of signor Cavanna, as on my own. These are the abominable vicissitudes incident to theatres, a trifle can save, and a trifle can ruin them (*x*). I hope Demetrio will be more fortunate. But to confess the truth, it runs a great risk of a similar fate, as it depends more on good performance, than decorations or stage effect: and the prejudice of Rome against our singers, is not a favourable circumstance. However, the same sudden turns which render theatrical success insecure, are equal reasons for our not giving way to despair.

Vienna, Jan. 19, 1732.

His opera of *Ippile*, was first performed in January 1732; and during its run, he

(*x*) This opera, after its successful first representation at Naples, in 1724, was performed at Venice, 1725, to the music of Tommaso Albinoni. In 1726, at Crema, to the same music, and at Rome to the original music of Sarro. It was likewise performed to this music at Turin, 1727, and at Venice, 1730. It is not recorded who was the unfortunate composer of the music, which was so ill received at Rome, in 1732, at the time of which Metastasio speaks in this letter.

sent

sent a copy of it to his friend, the Romanina for the Roman theatre, with an account of the scenes, and instructions for the scenery (*y*). He says, this opera was rehearsed in a great hurry. And adds, "I have begun the Oratorio; I correct the pres; assist in bringing out a play at court; curse the cold; and sigh every quarter of an hour; I am however very well."

In a subsequent letter, we have a further account of the success of *Iffipile*, and of the theatrical transactions at the Imperial court during this time.

## L E T T E R VIII.

TO THE ROMANINA.

N. M.

ON Tuesday evening, my opera of *ISSIPILE* was performed at court, for the last time, to such a croud, as had not been seen there on

(*y*) It is probable, that *Iffipile* was performed at Rome this year, to the original music, to which it had been set for Vienna, by Francesco Conti; but it was new set the same year, for Venice, by Giovanni Porta.

any

any former occasion. My most clement patrons were unwilling to displease a troop of gentlemen, who are acting very imperfectly, the *disconsolate Cicisbeo* of Fagioli; a comedy performed at Naples, and which we saw rehearsed at the house of the Abate Belvedere. By having one performance less of this piece, there might have been another of *Ippipile*, as all the court, city, and they themselves, wished; but slaves to their grandeur, they thought that this would have been construed into a clear disapprobation of the *dilettanti* comedians; and therefore have obliged themselves to hear it performed three times, like the opera, and another comedy in prose, acted by musicians. Retaining the distinction, of four representations, to that piece alone, which was performed by the Archduchesses. When the last representation of *Ippipile* was over, the Emperor, in descending from his box, came up to me, and, in the presence of the whole court, had the benevolence to express the pleasure he had received from my labours, and to tell me that *The Opera was very fine; that it had succeeded wonderfully, and that he was perfectly satisfied with me.* A distinction the

more honourable, as it is difficult to obtain any notice from our patron, who is so reserved in public, that when he deigns to bestow it, we are sure that it is not by accident, but design. I tell *you* all this, because in spite of your affected indifference for my person, I hope, nay believe, that you interest yourself extremely in all that concerns me.

There is an Abbey vacant in Sicily, called *St. Lucia*, by the death of a certain Abate Barbara: but my misfortune is, that I know not in what diocese it is situated, or whether it is requisite that the candidate should be a regular ecclesiastic.

Vienna, Feb. 23, 1732.

Part of this letter is lost; but it appears from other letters, that though he wished for secular preferment in the church, he had no intention to be an ecclesiastic *in sacris*.

L E T-

## LETTER IX.

## TO THE ROMANINA.

I AM arrived at the middle of the third act of my opera (*z*), so that next Sunday I hope to be able to tell you that it is finished. But when shall I come to the end of the next, which is likewise in meditation? It must, however, be ready by the end of August. Do you but wish me health and patience, and every thing will go well. With all my intense application, and the unfavourable season, I am almost exhausted. I say almost, because my head, from time to time, is unequal to its labour; probably from the pores being too much closed by the long continuance of the damp, and the chillness of the air in this place; so that in proportion as I suffered from the heat in Italy, I am

(*z*) He means the first opera for the next Carnival. Metastasio, besides occasional operas, cantatas, &c. usually furnished one drama for the Carnival, one for the Emperor's birth-day, and a third, or some other poem for music, for the Empress's birth-day. In the Carnival of 1731, after three performances of *Adriano*, Jan. 4, 6, and 8th, his second opera of *Demetrio* was brought on the stage, the 10th of the same month.

tormented by the cold in Germany. So much does the variation of climate change our nature. But I have not felt it in this particular only; my abilities to combat its effects, continually, are not natural. I know that the sluggishness of the air is communicated to the spirits, and diminishes their promptitude at exertion.

I inclose you a moral sonnet, which I composed in the midst of a pathetic scene that I was writing, and with which I was much affected; so that the laughing at myself, on finding my eyes streaming with tears for a distress of my own making, produced in my mind the thoughts which you will read in my sonnet; and which, if it appears tolerable, let others read also.

## SONETTO.

*Sogni, e favole io finge; eppure in carte,  
Mentre favole, e sogni orno, e disegno,  
In lor (falle che son!) prendo tal parte,  
Che del mal; che inventai, piango, e mi sfegnò;  
Ma forse allor che non m'inganna l'arte  
Più saggio sono, e l'agitato ingegno  
Fors' è allor più tranquillo? O forse parte  
Da più salda cagion l'amor, lo sfegno?  
Ab che non sol quelle, ch'io canto, o scrivo  
Favole son; ma quanto temo, o spero  
Tutti'menfogna, e delirando io vivo:*

*Sogni*

*Sogno della mia vita è il corso intero.*

*Deh tu, Signor, quando a destrar mi arrivo,  
Fa, ch'io trovi riposo in sen del vero (a).*

## S O N N E T.

The dreams and fables which I often feign,  
Fool that I am! a real grief impart;  
And evils, I myself have forg'd, give pain  
Which gen'rates tears and penetrates my heart.

Perhaps the illusion is not all a dream,  
Perhaps while agitated thus, we find  
Ourselves more wise, and truth and reason beam  
Unusual radiance on the ardent mind.

Oh ! that not only what I sing and write  
Were fabulous, but ev'ry hope and fear  
Which occupies my mind from morn to night,  
Like phantoms of the brain, would disappear !

This life is nothing but a dream throughout,  
Oh grant, great God ! whene'er it is resign'd,  
That I may wake exempt from fear and doubt,  
And in the arms of Truth, repose may find.

(a) The eleventh verse, the author says, may run  
thus.

*Seguendo l'ombre, in cui rivotto io vivo.*

It was in writing the ninth scene of the second act of  
the *Olimpiade*, that Metastasio found himself in tears, an  
effect which afterwards proved very contagious.

After I had written this sonnet, there came into my head, as usual, a scruple; which is, that the 11th verse and the 10th explain a proposition which may perhaps be thought too general, when I say *Ma quanto temo, o spero tutto è menzogna*: "But whatever I fear or hope is false." I would not have any dry and severe critic say to me, "What! don't you fear hell? don't you hope in God?" For, according to this, the hope in God and fear of hell are false. It is true, that in answer I might say, most sagacious Sir! I have known from my infancy, as well as you, that God and hell are indisputable truths; and if this was not my belief, I should not have recommended myself to God, at the close, in the manner I have done. The hopes and fears of which I speak in the sonnet, are those that proceed from mere terrestrial objects. You see that the defence is sufficiently solid, and the counter-poison is found in the sonnet itself. Read it, and give me your opinion sincerely, without concealing from me that of Monsignor Nicolini, which will have great weight with me. I salute the whole house, and to yourself I heartily recommend your V. N. V. N. N. M. addio.

Vienna, June 6, 1732.

L E T.

## LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

I BEGIN my letter with a dreadful piece of news, just arrived from Prague by the post, which has extremely afflicted me, as well as all Vienna. The following is the copy of a letter which I have just received.

Prague, 11th June.

" THE Emperor being upon a shooting-party, in the wood of Branchais, and having fired at a stag, the ball, after passing through the animal, wounded his Highness, the Prince of Schwaïsemberg, Master of the horse, in the left side, in so fatal a manner as was immediately pronounced to be mortal; and this morning, between three and four o'clock, he died. This dreadful calamity has thrown the Emperor into the deepest affliction. It was with the utmost difficulty that he was prevented from going to see the dying Prince, in order to ask his pardon; but he was at last prevailed on to send Count St. Julian to perform this melancholy office."

This news has thrown the whole city into the greatest consternation, many for the love they bore the Prince, and all for the suffering of our most august Master, whose humanity and tenderness are known to be such, as must have disordered his whole frame, as well as wounded his mind; yet it was impossible to prevail on him to be bled, which was thought by the faculty to be absolutely necessary to his safety. And the worst of all is, that the Empress, whose circumspect and prudent advice would have had most weight, in prevailing on his Majesty to submit to his physicians, was unfortunately not in Prague, having begun the use of the waters at *Carlesbad*. In consequence of this accident, the festival of August will not be celebrated in the city of *Cromau*, as I wrote you word; for being a place that belonged to the deceased Prince, it would be very ill calculated for joy and festivity. I shall wait for new orders; but the general opinion is, that the Emperor will soon return to Vienna.

I have nothing to say at present to Sig. Ant. Tommaso Lazzaretti. The information which you have procured, concerning the vacancy in Sicily, arrives too late; we

must now look forward to other things. Your attention, however, convinces me of your kind concern and zeal for my service; which I shall always try to preserve, and of which I am both pleased and proud.

You cannot imagine how much I am afflicted with the disgrace of the theatre *delle Dame*. The worst part of the story is, that in whatever way the poor Cavanna may try to recover the public favour, his loss must be very great. My brother has written me the news of the town. His information is now a little stale, but I am, nevertheless, obliged to him. I embrace, thank, and beg of him the continuance of his intelligence.

How can I sufficiently thank you for the affectionate anxiety you express about my health; it is already mended by your letter; think then what it would be by yourself. Many compliments to Bulga, and other friends; and accept yourself of a thousand protestations of the immutability of your N.  
Adieu, N. M.

Vieppa, June 14, 1732.

L E T.

## LETTER XI. \*

TO THE SAME.

Was there ever such a dislocation of the things of this world, both small and great! Can a more unhappy accident be imagined, than that which I related in my last letter? And of another kind, can greater desolation be represented to the mind, than that which you have so well described in your letter which I received this morning? It is terrible, that a great city should be obliged to suffer for the caprice of an individual, and that, for such frivolous motives, he should have no repugnance to injuring numbers, and displeasing all.

I pity those who feel the loss; and even without this motive, it is impossible to be indifferent.

The Emperor, after the unhappy accident, returned to Prague, where, according to all accounts, he shut himself up in his room, without seeing a human creature, during a whole day and night. Prince Eugene was the first, who, with respectful violence, forced himself into his presence, and interrupted

rupted the solitude and profound affliction in which he was immersed. It is universally believed, to have been wholly from the care and importunity of the Prince, that he allowed himself, at length, to be bled, and conveyed to *Carlesbad*, where he still remains, and will try the effect of the waters.

The youngest Archduchess, Marianne, has been six days ill with the small-pox; news that will increase the agitation of our royal Master, at being so far from her. There are, however, no dangerous symptoms, and the physicians prognosticate a happy recovery. In the mean time, the eldest Archduchess, Teresa, is separated from her sister, to escape infection. The Empress dowager, Amelia, widow of Joseph, has quitted the convent, where she lived retired, in order to reside with the Archduchess Teresa, in the Imperial palace, *Favorita*, till the sisters can safely be again united.

I am well in health, but ill in spirits. All these events make me miserable; and the public melancholy inseparably communicates itself, even to the indifferent. At present, the return of their Imperial Majesties is not known. The accident which happened, and the illness of the Archduchess, it is believed,

lieved, will hasten them; but all is conjecture,  
In the mean time, I have nothing to cheer  
me, but your good health; preserve it care-  
fully, and believe me your N.

Addio, N. M.

Vienna, June 21, 1732.

## L E T T E R XII.

TO THE SAME.

I PLAINLY perceive, that I am an animal  
of a distinct genus from the common race  
of men. Nobody has the *Influenza* more  
than once; but I am honoured with it  
twice. Though I suffered, and recovered,  
like other people, last week; yet, this week,  
comes the second volume, with a cough,  
head-ach, and other complaints: however,  
I am again perfectly well. I hear that you  
are attacked by this disorder in the same  
manner; I am sorry it has reached you; I  
hope it will not be very obstinate; indeed if  
its quality is not more malignant at Rome,  
than in Germany, you have no occasion to  
be greatly alarmed.

I am

I am glad that my *Afilo d'Amore*\* cuts a figure in Italy, even with a composition of Cardinal Polignac, though with some disadvantage. I perfectly agree with the public, in their approbation of the latter; and it appears to me, that in this production of the Cardinal, the human heart is laid open with great sagacity, and the morality interspersed, does not savour of pedantry; a common defect with all those who wish to instruct, but disdain to please. It is very true, that this species of poetry is much less difficult than the other, I mean than that in which any one is highly praised. Praise offends the self-love of those who hear it, and our malignant nature makes us imagine, that what is given to others, is taken from ourselves. So that panegyrics seldom please, though good; whereas satire is welcome, however coarse and unjust. This may account for the difficulty of gulping the pill of praise, in such a manner, as to make us forget ourselves. But I shall not mount the pulpit, or assume the part of a Seneca; and yet I know

\* This was a little Festal Drama of one act, written for the Empress's birth-day, and performed to the music of Caldara, in the Imperial Palace at Lintz, in Upper Austria, August 1732.

not how it is, but whenever I write to you, I feel a disposition to philosophise, and what is more extraordinary, without the fear of tiring you.

Vienna, Dec. 6, 1732.

The following Letter, to the same correspondent, seems of the first class in the collection.

### L E T T E R XIII.

WILL you suggest to me a subject for an opera, or no? I am plunged into an abyss of doubt. Nay, don't laugh, and tell me I am mad. The subject of an opera is of the greatest consequence. Luckily, it is my good fortune to be absolutely obliged to decide immediately; otherwise, I should remain undetermined till the day of judgment, and even then, *Da Capo*. Read the 3d scene, act iii. of my *Adriano*. Observe the character which the Emperor gives of himself, and you will there see that of your friend. He knew his infirmity, and so do I mine, but without correcting it \*.

*Ab! tu non sai*

*Qual guerra di pensieri*

\* Though the Poet does not in his letter quote *himself*; yet in order to save the reader the trouble of turning to the reflexion to which he alludes, we insert it, with a translation.

*Agita*

*Agita l'alma mia. Roma, il Senato,  
Emirena, Sabina,  
La mia gloria, il mio amor, tutto ho presente :  
Tutto accordar vorrei : trovo per tutto  
Qualche scoglio a temer. Scelgo, mi penso ;  
Poi d'essermi pentito  
Mi ritorno a pentir. Mi stanco intanto  
Nel lungo dubitar, tal che dal male  
Il ben più non distinguo. Alfin mi veggo  
Stretto dal tempo, e mi risolvo al peggio.*

Ah ! thou knowest not  
What warring sentiments distract my soul.  
Rome, the Senate, Emirena, Sabina,  
My fame, my love, all are present ; and I  
Would fain accord them all. Yet find, where'er  
I turn my eyes, some rock to fear. I chuse,  
Repent, and then, ~~affowards~~, repenting of repentance,  
Return again to the first thought, and thus .  
Give birth to new contrition ; till at length,  
Quite wearied and perplex'd with endless doubt,  
I can no longer distinguish ~~right~~ right  
~~and~~ wrong. And lastly, having no more leisure  
For self-debate, I choose the worst.

This obstinate vice of indecision torments me, without affording the smallest pleasure in return ; I feel it without the least power of resistance ; it is the tyranny of body over mind ; and I am convinced, that these excesses of doubt and irresolution, the great enemies of action, are occasioned by the mechanism of our soul's habitation, which makes

as see things through a false medium : as the rays of the sun are diverged, discoloured, and rendered yellow, green, or red, according to the body or medium through which they shine. Hence it is, that man seems not to act by reason, but mechanical impulse ; adapting reason to his feelings, and not his feelings to reason. If this were not the case ; all those who think well, would act well ; but we see the contrary. Who ever examined nature and virtue better than Aristotle ? And who has ever been more ungrateful to both ? Who has ever taught us better than Seneca, to despise death, and who ever feared it more than himself ? Who has ever uttered finer maxims of œconomy than our *Paul Doria*, and who ever squandered his patrimony more miserably ? In short, the doctrine is true, and radically sound ; but we do not examine it in all its ramifications ; because that would carry us too far.

You are not tired when I play the philosopher with you. Indeed I do it with no one else ; and I have not forgotten the various conversations of this kind, which we enjoyed when we happily passed many hours of each day together. But how materials for such

such discussions are increased since, by experience! We may speak further on these matters sometime or other, if the freaks of fortune do not entangle the thread of my honourable and fatiguing web.—*The rest of this letter has been suppressed.*

Vienna, July 4, 1733.

## L E T T E R XIV.

TO THE SAME.

MAY years unnumbered be added to the life of my most august Patron! who yesterday published in my favour, a truly Cæsarean decree, in the supreme council of Spain, by which I am invested with the office of *Treasurer* to the province of Cosenza in the kingdom of Naples: a post for life, of honour, authority, and if I were to perform the business myself in person, of considerable profit; but even after paying a deputy, the clear salary will amount to 1500 florins a year. You see that the appointment is not inconsiderable in point of pecuniary advantage; but be assured, that the honour done me by the solicitude, affection, and con-

descension, with which the Emperor has deigned to confer this benefit upon me, infinitely surpasses all lucrative considerations. It was publicly declared, at the Imperial table, to one of the members of the council, as a reward for my past and present labours; and his Imperial Majesty was pleased to add, that he had, unsolicited, mentioned this appointment in council, as my just due. This public partiality of His Majesty in my favour, has made such an impression, that yesterday, contrary to custom, when the decree was mentioned, there was no one of the counsellors who ventured to utter a syllable against it; but part of them said coldly, that the order should be executed, while the rest applauded the justice and propriety of the appointment. The best part of the story is, that this favour has been granted without the least recommendation of any kind; so that I owe it entirely to the beneficent heart of Cæsar, to whom may God grant a long, fortunate, and glorious life! I shall probably be put to some difficulty in paying the fees of office, which I believe will be considerable; but I shall be soon reimbursed.

Yesterday,

Yesterday, after dinner, to moderate my joy for this my good fortune, I met with an accident which might have been serious, but was of no great consequence. In mounting the stair-case of the theatre, at the palace called the *Favourita*, in order to reconnoitre the stage, one of the steps gave way under me, and I went head foremost to the next stairs, as if shot out of a cannon. However, except two slight contusions, I escaped very well. This I may regard as a second piece of good fortune, equal to the first. I am now going to demand an audience, in order to thank my Imperial Patron.

By the next post, you shall be informed of all that he says to me. Addio N. M.

Vienna, July 28, 1733.

This was the last letter to the Romanina, that has been preserved. That zealous friend of his head, as well as heart, dying about the middle of February 1734, manifested the sincerity of her attachment to the poet, by bequeathing to him all her possessions, after the decease of her husband, to the amount of twenty-five thousand crowns. But Metastasio, always consistent, with his usual rectitude and propriety, to-

totally declined accepting of her intended kindness, and transferred the whole bequest to her husband, whose real property, according to our English ideas of jurisprudence, it seems legally to have been. The testamentary laws of Italy, may be different from those of our country. Some Italian writers say, that the Romanina left Metastasio *erede di tutto il suo PATRIMONIO.* "Heir to all her patrimony." If by patrimony was meant an estate possessed by inheritance, and independantly settled upon her at the time of her marriage, her testamentary dispositions are reconcileable to English ideas of law in such cases; though preferring the friend to the husband, deviates somewhat from the general custom of our country. That the bequest was legal, has never been doubted by Metastasio's biographers, who all speak of his renunciation in the highest terms of panegyric, as uncommonly disinterested, generous, and heroic. And the poet himself, as well as all Italy, regarded it as a noble sacrifice.

Whether Metastasio's connection with the Romanina, was purely platonic, or of a less seraphic kind, I shall not pretend to determine. But the husband residing in the same house

house with them, both at Naples and Rome, and the friendly manner in which the Poet always mentioned him in his letters to the wife, with the open manner in which he expressed his affliction in writing to him after her death, would, in England, be thought indications favourable to conjugal fidelity. But a chaste actress and opera singer, is a still more uncommon phenomenon in Italy, than in Great Britain.

Yet though it is not thought absolutely necessary for the female singers of Italy to be vestals, while single, or Lucretia's when married, they find it convenient to have a nominal husband, who will fight their battles, contend with the first man, and *Impresario* of an opera; and, occasionally, stand in the gap, as circumstances may require.

But whether the Poet's friendship for Bulgarini, the husband, was pure and undissembled or not, his affliction for the death of his wife, seems to have been unfeignedly deep and sincere. The following pathetic letter, written immediately after he had received the news of her decease, and of her testament in his favour, seems a faithful delineation of the state of his mind at this time, and to correspond with that goodness

of heart, as well as those tender feelings and lofty ideas of rectitude, which appear in all his other writings, and which have enabled the general tenor of his life,

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## LETTER XV.

TO SIGNOR DOMENICO BULGARINI,

OPPRESSED by the afflicting news of the death of our poor Marianna, I know not how to begin this letter. The tidings are intolerable to me on so many accounts, that I can devise no means to diminish the ~~acute~~-ness of my sufferings; and therefore, I trust you will not accuse me of want of feeling, if I am unable to suggest to you any consolation for your loss, as I have hitherto been utterly unequal to finding any for myself.

The last disposition of the poor deceased in my favour, aggravates the cause of my sorrow, and obliges me to give a public and incontestable proof of the disinterestedness of that friendship, which I professed to her while living, and which I shall preserve for her honoured memory, to the last moment of my existence. Knowing therefore, how much affection, kindness, and zeal, for the welfare

of the poor Marianna, you have always manifested, I shall best shew my gratitude to her, by entirely renouncing, in your favour, all claim to her effects; not through pride, God preserve me from such ingratitude! but because it appears to be my duty, as an honest man and a Christian. The advantage which I shall still derive from this inheritance, even after renouncing it, will not be inconsiderable: as the knowing what was intended for me by the generous testatrix, will be a lasting proof of her friendship; and the relinquishing it in your favour, will be a proof of my disinterestedness with respect to her, and of my equity towards yourself. I am at present, thank God, in no need of such assistance, as I am rewarded beyond my merit; so that I shall not suffer by the sacrifice I make to you. Though I entangle you with no conditions in the renunciation which I inclose, yet I have some requests to make, and counsels to suggest to you.

My first request is, that the relinquishing this claim, may in no wise dissolve our friendship; but that, according to the wish of the poor Marianna, our correspondence may continue as entire as if she were still living; substituting you at

all times, and in all places, for her representative.

My second request is, that you will undertake the trouble of receiving the salaries of my three offices in Rome, and the transacting of my Neapolitan concerns, exactly in the same manner as was done by our incomparable Marianne ; for which purpose, I send you proper powers. I write likewise to Signor Tenerelli, at Naples, who will treat you in the same manner, as Signora Marianne herself ; remitting to you, from time to time, whatever sums may be due to me from that quarter, continuing to my poor family, the usual assignments and provision, if you shall chuse it, jointly with my brother.

The advice which seems necessary for me to give you, is, that you would assist the poor family of Signor Francesco Lombardi, by every means in your power ; and try by acts of charity to do every thing for them, which, in a similar situation, you would expect from them to you. I have specified in my renunciation, some particulars in which you should assist them ; but besides my unwillingness to involve you in trouble and difficulty, I am so certain of the goodness of your heart, that

that I have left all the merit of your benevolence towards them, to the liberality of your own determination.

In all things else, you are at full liberty to act as occasion, and your own prudence, shall suggest.

At present, my mind is in too great perturbation for me to attempt giving you a plan for the regulation of your conduct. I shall only say, that it appears to me, as if you should dispose of all the effects you can spare, in order to raise a capital, and that you should live in a smaller house,

I can think of no other testimony to offer you, at present, of my friendship and confidence. Be equally open in your correspondence, and consider my interests as your own, and me as your brother. I am unable now to write a longer letter; when my mind is more tranquil, I shall communicate to you such thoughts as may occur.

In the mean time, love me, and endeavour to be comforted yourself. Be assured, if it were in my power, that I would try to contribute that to your consolation, which I am unable to receive myself.

Vienna, March 13, 1734.

The

The following letter to his brother, in apology for his renunciation of the Romanina's intended kindness, will serve as an illustration of the principle upon which it was made, as well as of his own rectitude of character.

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## LETTER XVI.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLD TRAPASSI.

IN my present agitation for the unexpected death of the poor generous Marianne, my utmost efforts will enable me to write but little. I can only tell you, that both my honour and conscience have obliged me to relinquish, in favour of her husband, Domenico, that bequest which she intended for me. I owe to the world an indisputable proof, that my friendship for her, was neither built upon avarice, nor self-interest. I ought not to abuse the partiality of my poor deceased friend, at the expence of her husband; and God, I trust, will permit me to prosper, by some other means for my integrity. For myself, I am in want of no more than my present income; for my family, I have sufficient at Rome for their comfortable

comfortable support. Indeed if it shall please God to continue to me my present Neapolitan resources, I shall be able to give further proofs of my affection for my relations, and for yourself in particular. Communicate these resolutions to our father, to whom I am unable to write at present. Assure him of my fixt determination to assist him always, as I have hitherto done; or rather, to increase that assistance, if things are prosperous at Naples. In short, I beg you will use your utmost endeavours to make him enter into my reasons, that I may not be afflicted with his disapprobation of my honest and christian procedure,

In the mean time, I beg you will unite interests with Sig. Domenico, from whom I hope you will experience that friendship, which may be expected in return for the confidence and consideration with which I have treated him. I have transmitted to him proper powers for transacting my money concerns, so that all things will go on as usual. But the poor Marianne will never return! and I believe that the rest of my life will be insipid and sorrowful. Condemn not, I entreat you, my resolution, and believe me ever yours. Vienna, March 13, 1734.

He

He expressed his sensibility for the loss of the Romanina, in the same affectionate manner, to another correspondent.

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## LETTER XVII.

TO A FRIEND AT ROME.

Was it necessary for such a calamity to happen, in order to procure me the long wished for pleasure of hearing from you? At least, since the price is so great, I beg it may be continued, to mitigate, by the renovation of our intercourse, the remembrance of my misfortune; a remembrance which seems to have placed me in the world as in a populous desert, and in that kind of desolation in which a man, if he were transported in his sleep to China or Tartary, would find himself in waking, among people of whose language, inclinations, and manners, he was quite ignorant. In the midst of these imaginations, reason enough is left to tell me who, and what I am; but that is not sufficient to free me from affliction. May God, in whose hands are all events, turn this affliction to my benefit.

and

and teach me by such a manifestation, what a vain hope it is, to form systems of happiness, without his assistance \*. You advise me to go to Rome in order to settle, in person, the affair of the testament made in my favour by the generous deceased ; but if I were not prevented by the duties of my station, and the present tempestuous state of Italy, you see, that by renouncing all claims to this inheritance, such a step becomes wholly unnecessary. I know not whether my renunciation will be approved by all ; but I know very well, that neither my honour nor conscience would permit me to abuse the excessive partiality of a poor woman, to the detriment of her relations, and that even the want of necessaries would be

\* Having communicated a few MS. sheets of these Memoirs to my old and much honoured friend Mr. Mason, for whose learning, judgment, and genius, I have always had the highest respect ; in perusing the present letter, when he came to this part, he wrote with a pencil the following opinion, which, as it confirms my own, I shall take the liberty to insert :

" I think this paragraph a proof that there had been nothing criminal between him and Marianne. Such a man as M. writing to a friend, would have expressed in this place some compunction, at least he would not have invoked the Deity in such a solemn manner." M.

much more tolerable to me, than the shame  
of such an action.

Vienna, April 3, 1734.

He says to the same friend, in another letter, written May 22, of the same year: "If I should affect the philosopher, and tell you that I was sorry to hear that my country had been so lavish of applause for the renunciation I have lately made, I should be very insincere. It pleases me much, and will fortify my opinion of the justice of the act; indeed, I regard these praises as a surprising instance of affection from so great a mother, even to the meanest of her sons."

END OF THE SECOND SECTION.

SECTION

## S E C T I O N III.

AMONG the letters of Metastasio that have been published, there are three to his father, and many to his brother Leopold, at Rome; These last, chiefly without date, are generally filled with family concerns, and kind counsel. Among many excellent maxims of prudence and good conduct, Metastasio chiefly recommends diligence to his brother, who seems, through his means, to have been invested with an office under the Pontifical government. "Never," says he, " defer till to-morrow what you can do to-day. A weight divided into small portions, becomes insupportable when united."

It is pleasing to humanity to find what respect and attention the Poet enjoins his brother towards their aged parent, whom he supported in ease and comfort, to the end of a long life.

"Though I am certain," says he to his brother, "that you will not be deficient in duty, yet suffer me to recommend to you not to spare *me*, in any expence that can remove inconvenience or add to his comfort. If he were not our father, his age and infirmities

furmities would demand our most tender compassion; consider then what we owe him, as sons."

But in the anecdotes, that have been lately published, concerning the private life of our admirable Poet\*; among his peculiarities, some are related which seem too serious for ridicule, and from which I should be sorry, for his honour, and for the honour of human nature, not to be able to defend him. What a disgrace to practical virtue and benevolence would it be, to find a writer whose works breathe the purest principles of virtue and morality, and whose life, during more than fifty years residence at Vienna, was unimpeachably innocent, and exemplary in the exercise of religious duties; to want, not only filial and fraternal affection, but even those common and laudable partialities for his kindred and countrymen, to which the most vulgar minds are naturally prone! It has been said †, with a degree of levity and sport, perhaps more *pour égaier les choses*, and enliven a period, than from conviction, or a wish to degrade the Poet's moral character, that "he refused to hear, and took

\* *Elogj Italiani dell Andrea Rubbi.* Ven. 1782.

† Ib. *Annotazioni all' Elogio di Pietro Metastasio, Art. Pregiudizj.*

pains not to know whether he had in his latter days, any one relation left in the world." And on this uncharitable assertion, the world is to make its *observations and reflections?* For my own part, I shall make no reflections injurious to the poet or his censurers, but furnish candid minds with the following letters, and extracts from others, written by Metastasio to his father and brother, as a complete answer to hasty conclusions of his want of affection for his family.

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## LETTER I.

TO FELICE TRAPPASSI, THE FATHER OF  
METASTASIO.

You cannot imagine with what joy I learned from your most respected letter, the recovery of that health, for which I have ever been so anxious.

I return you my most humble thanks for the care which you have kindly taken to remove from my mind such painful anxiety, and I pray to God, that in lengthening your days, he would deign to add to them a portion of my own, provided I have time sufficient

allowed me once more to embrace you, and to render you, in person, fresh testimonies of my respect and reverence.

I am unable, to-day, to write to our dear Perroni. But fail not, I entreat you, to let him know that I am well, and to embrace and salute him most heartily. Humbly begging you to be careful of your health, and to grant me your benediction.

I remain, &c.

Vienna, Feb. 7, 1739-

## LETTER II.

### TO THE SAME.

I HAVE just received your most respected letter of the thirteenth of January, full of all those expressions of paternal affection, which though familiar to your partial love towards me, if repeated a thousand and a thousand times, would always impress my mind with new delight, and exact from me new gratitude.

I assure you that there is nothing I more ardently wish than the seeing, embracing, and giving you new testimonies of that filial tenderness and respect which are so justly

your

your due; though the narrow limits prescribed by fortune to my powers, have not yet allowed me to convince you of them by any other means.

Hitherto I have seen no likelihood of the pontifical intentions of kindness towards me, ending in any thing more than good wishes, upon which it would be very unsafe for hope to build. A thousand embraces to my brother, and to all our family.

Czà Katum, Feb. 9, 1743.

### L E T T E R III.

#### TO THE SAME.

THE duties of my employment, on occasion of the nuptials of these Princes (*b*) have not permitted me sooner to answer your most respected letter of last month. Though I have no occasion for new proofs, to convince me of your paternal tenderness, I receive an inexpressible pleasure from the affectionate expressions which you have been pleased to

(*b*) Prince Charles of Lorrain with Marianna, Archduchess of Austria, sister to Terefa, afterwards Empress-queen.

bestow upon me ; and be assured, that if I had leisure, my correspondence would exceed all bounds, if so sacred a duty could admit of excess.

The most precious proof you can give me of your affection, is the care of your health ; and confirming me in the ardent hope which I have long cherished of, sometime or other, again embracing you, and receiving, in person, your paternal benediction.

Vienna, Jan. 25, 1744.

## L E T T E R      IV.

### TO THE SAME.

YOUR affectionate letter of the 16th of last month, was most grateful to me ; as is every thing that comes from you, as well for the happy news of your health, as for the proofs it contained of your affection ; which, though unnecessary persuasives, are always welcome consolations. It is most certain, that the turbulent situation in which I find myself, renders the structure of happiness, which I have been so many years forming, less and less solid. This makes me more melancholy than

than I used naturally to be ; but at present, thank God, in spite of the terrible aspect of public affairs, by close application to my books, which keeps off painful reflections, I am insensibly become more tranquil. I imitate you in wishing the prosperity which you presage, but not in expecting it. I have been so long deluded by hope, that, at present, the more she appears to smile, the less confidence I place in her ; and this incredulity, renders the strokes of ill fortune less afflicting. You do extremely well to continue to cherish hope for yourself ; by that means, you have the enviable faculty of anticipating expected blessings, and enjoying them as much at a distance, as if they were in your possession ; and no sooner does one set of imaginary blessings vanish, than another arises, to console the time present, for the disappointment of the past. For my misfortune, I am very barren of all such delusive hopes, which indeed affect me so differently, that what is balm to your mind, becomes poison to mine.

Would to heaven you were a prophet, and that I could give you less limited signs of my love and respect.

Vienna, June 13, 1744.

I 3

At

At this time, his father cherished the most brilliant expectations from his son's exalted situation at Vienna, and the late professions of kindness towards him from the Pope.

In answer to a letter from his brother, about collecting and printing his works, in which he seems to have entertained splendid hopes from the effects of a dedication to the Elector Palatine, he says, "Whatever you do with those trifles, I advise you not to be too sanguine in your expectations from that quarter. Neither princes nor their satellites, have the will or the power to reward talents in the manner good people are apt to imagine. Indeed, I know not what their definition of merit may be, and have too profound a respect for it, to attempt its investigation; I shall leave it, therefore, among those *mysteries* which (though not contrary) are superior to reason."

Though these fraternal letters are written on subjects little interesting to the public, there are frequent traits in them, which if not to be rigidly styled *wit*, or *humour*, amount to something between both: a half-and-half pleasantry, peculiar to our author, and perhaps to his language. I shall venture to instance a few of these, without much confidence

confidence in my abilities of transfusing their spirit into English.

In a very short letter to his brother, of only one page, he says: "When you see our dear and most placid Jomelli, pray spur him up to finish the work he has undertaken for the court of Spain. I have a commission to give him a jog, no easy task, at this distance (*c.*). Now the d—l would have me turn over, but *non concurredus*."

The post days being changed at Vienna, he tells his brother, that having forgotten the alteration, he had been an unpunctual correspondent without design, or convenience to himself from the delay! It is hard, says he, "to get rid of old habits,—Nor is it less difficult to change Monday to Saturday, than to live in an *oblate spheroid*, in a world *flattened* at the poles by new astronomers, after so long imagining that I lived in one that was round."

Having written a *Cantata*, for the birth of an Arch-dutchess, he desires his brother not to mention it; for if the mere title is

(*c.*) Jomelli, who composed so much, and so admirably, when he set about it, was naturally indolent, and unwilling to work; though equally unwilling to disoblige his friends by a refusal, when they intreated him to exercise his talents.

known, it will soon be thought an old production. It is named, says he, "*La Gara*, pray acknowledge it for your nephew."

He tells his brother, who consulted him about publishing a treatise, which he had ready for the press, that "the height of folly in an author, is the printing his works at his own expence. He must be initiated in the mysteries of mercenary associates, ere he can get out of such traffic with whole bones."

During the last war between the Empress-queen, and the late King of Prussia, Metastasio, who was very much attached to his Imperial Patroness, frequently sends his brother the political news of the times, "At present says he, we have more troops in Bohemia, than the King of Prussia expects; and as he is now marched into that kingdom, if he chuses to dance, there will be no want of music: and the country-dances will be very lively."—"The war will become more and more violent every day, unless the English change their imperious tone, a difficult metamorphose."—"The King of Prussia has made several movements, which have called upon our generals for all their attention; but, however, they seem only

only to arise from that kind of restlessness, which makes sick and infirm people, always hope to acquire ease by a change of position."

" I am tired of a little journey into Parnassus which I made in a great hurry, by order of our Court. And yet, I write to you the instant I return, with my boots still on. Pray be thankful that you have not been neglected in the midst of such sufferings."

" *Artaserse* is the most fortunate of all my children. The rest have experienced various vicissitudes; but this, through the obstinacy of fate, has always been in the stirrups (*d*). So that dramas have their constellations."

The correspondence with his brother Leopold, continued till December 17th, 1762, about which time he probably died. In letters to his banker and friend, Signor Argenvilliers, at Rome, which began in 1750, after his father's decease, he constantly mentions his brother, and gives instructions for the payment of sums allotted for his use. In 1759, Leopold had a very dangerous fever, which greatly alarmed Metastasio, who, in

(*d*) Always successful, never *dismounted*.

writing to Signor Argenvilliers, expresses his anxiety in a manner too affectionate for a man who “refused to hear, and took pains not to know, whether he had any one relation in the world.”

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## LETTER V.

TO SIGNOR FRANCESCO ARGENVILLIERS,  
BANKER, AT ROME.

You have furnished me with a new proof, my dear friend, of the goodness of your heart, in the affectionate care you have taken of my brother, the Advocate, and of my tranquillity, by visiting him yourself, and faithfully informing me of the state in which you found him, during the violent fever with which he was attacked. He has written me a short letter, which has given me a heart-ake, by its brevity. I entreat you to spare me in nothing that can contribute in the least to his assistance; I cannot explain to you what will be my anxiety, till the next post. Though your kind letter gives great hopes, yet you know, by experience, what are the emotions of the heart, for the danger of a brother.

Vienna, Sept. 10, 1759.

LET-

## LETTER VI,

TO THE SAME.

I WANT expressions to describe to you, my dear and worthy friend, the tenderness and gratitude with which I feel myself attached to you. The care which you take, not only of my brother's health, but of my ease of mind, surpasses all bounds; and that, not merely in the first letter concerning the dreadful malady, but the second, written by another hand. God preserve you for the consolation of your friends, and the honour of humanity, which has not many such to boast. You have encouraged me to hope the best, and it is from your kindness that I can expect tranquillity. Pray thank my sister, who, according to your account, has distinguished herself by the exercise of her duty upon this occasion. Oh, my dear friend, if I could but express what my heart feels for you ! But do you, who are capable of such actions, judge of their effects, and believe me, while I have existence, &c.

*P. S.* Pray give me credit for whatever may be wanting on account of my brother's illness,

illness, in case the expence should exceed the effects which I had in your hands.

Vienna, Sep. 13, 1759.

## L E T T E R VII.

TO THE SAME.

ALL my expectations of letters from Rome have failed me to-day; imagine therefore, my dear friend, what agitation my mind must suffer, already trembling with doubt for my brother's safety. I know the excellency of my dear Sig. Argenvilliers' heart, by a thousand proofs; so that I cannot imagine it possible for you to neglect me at such a critical moment. But affection, always timid and suspicious, suggests to me that you have perhaps been silent through prudence; or, through delicacy, have inclosed your letter to some other person, who may prepare me for the event. Forgive, my most excellent friend, these human doubts. I do not try to suppress humanity, and confess, that I have at present no power over my affliction. But here comes another servant, who says that the Roman letters are not yet arrived,

so that I return to the hope, with which your last kind letter inspired me, of better tidings. I shall leave this open as long as possible, and, in the mean time, embrace you with that respectful esteem, which so dear and worthy a friend merits. Addio.

*P. S.* The letters from Rome of the 5th instant, are at last arrived, as I have seen several in the hands of friends to whom they were addressed; but there are none for me! I know not what to think, and therefore relapse into my former agitation."

Vienna, Sep. 17, 1759.

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His brother, however, recovered of this indisposition, as we find by a letter to the same correspondent, written three days after the above.

" I beg your pardon, my most admirable friend, for the inquietude which my preceding letter must have occasioned. This instant two of your letters are brought to me, one written on the 5th, and another on the 8th of the present month, I know not by what accident the first was delayed, which, by not being delivered on Sunday, set me upon making cruel almanacs. Thank God for deigning to extend his mercy to us all; and

and thank you for the numerous demonstrations you have given, of the temper of your own mind."

After fifty-two years absence from Rome, Metastasio seems to have survived all his relations and juvenile friends, and to have made a just and equitable will in favour of the Martinetz family, with whom having constantly resided in tranquillity and comfort, to make them his heirs was a laudable manifestation of his friendship and gratitude. His benevolence and sensibility have never been called in question by his countrymen, who, on the contrary, have extolled these qualities in him, even more than his genius for poetry.

And now having spoken of his birth, adoption, education, first poetical productions, attachment to a female friend, affliction for her loss, and affection for his family; we shall proceed in the next section to his writings, in chronological order, and consider him more particularly as a Lyric Poet and a Critic.

END OF THE THIRD SECTION.

SECTION

## S E C T I O N IV.

THE year 1733 seems to have been extremely fertile in the Parnassian territories of our bard. Not only the opera of *Olimpiade*, and *Demofoonte*, with the oratorio of *Giuseppe riconosciuto*, but his charming canzonet, *La Libertà*, were productions of this year. This celebrated canzonet: *Grazie agl'inganni tuoi*, was set by the bard himself, to an air of which *Cocchi*, when he was in England thirty years ago, furnished me with a copy. And as Metastasio confessed to me at Vienna, that he was the author of this air, I shall present it to my musical readers, as a curiosity. For though it has been set as a Venetian Ballad, a Canzonet, a Duo, and a Cantata, by so many great composers, to much more elaborate and fanciful music than this; yet Metastasio's melody, which has been composed more than fifty years, has still its merit; and, compared with airs of the same period and kind, will be found superior to most of them in elegant simplicity.

LA

## LA LIBERTÀ, a Nice. Canzonetta.

*Parole e Musica di Metastasio.*

The musical score consists of three staves of music in common time, treble clef, and G major. The lyrics are written below the notes in Italian. The score is divided into three sections by vertical bar lines.

*Grazie agl'in-gan-ni tuoi, al fin re-spi-ro o*

*Nice, al fin d'un' in-fe - - li - ce, eb - ber gli*

*Dei pi - e - tà, el-ber gli Dei pi - e - tà,*

*Dei pi - e - tà, eb ber gli Dei pi - e - tà.*

*Sento*

Sen-to da' lac-ci suoi, sen-to che l'alma è sciolta;

Non fog-no quef-ta vol-ta, quef-ta vol-ta, non fog-no

li - - ber - tà, Non fog-no li - - ber - tà.

## IN DIFFERENCE.

TO METASTASIO'S OWN MUSIC,

Nisa, thy pow'r is flown,  
I thank thee for my cure;  
The gods have mercy shewn,  
Thy tricks no more allure.

From all thy chains I feel  
My soul, at length, is free;  
No dream I now reveal,  
I wake to liberty.

VOL. I.

K

Mancos

## II.

*Mancò l'antico ardore,  
E son tranquillo a segno,  
Che in me non trova sfoggio  
Per manifestarsi amor.  
Non cambio più colore,  
Quando il tuo nome a'col'o;  
Quando ti miro in volto,  
Più non mi batte il cor.*

All former ardor's fled,  
Which petulance could move ;  
And that disdain is dead,  
Which masks itself in love.  
Nor does my colour change,  
Whoe'er thy name repeats ;  
When o'er thy face I range,  
My heart no longer beats.

## III.

*Sogno, ma te non miro  
Sempre ne' sogni mi ci;  
Mi desto, e tu non sei  
Il primo mio pensier.  
Lungi da te m'aggirò,  
Senza bramarti mai;  
Son teco, e non mi fai,  
Né pena, né piacer.*

In dreams thou'rt now forgot,  
And cast on Lethe's brink ;  
And when I wake, thou'rt not  
The first on whom I think.  
To distant climes I steer,  
Nor miss thee day or night ;  
Nor dost thou, when thou'rt near,  
Or pain, or joy excite.

## IV.

*Di tua bestia ragiona,  
Né intenerir mi fento ;  
I torti miei ramento,  
E non mi fa sfegnaro.  
Confusa più non sono,  
Quando mi vieni appresso ;  
Col mio rivale y'lego  
Poffo di te parlar.*

Of all thy charms I now  
Can calmly think and speak,  
Can trace each broken vow,  
Nor means of vengeance seek,  
Confus'd no more I seem  
Whene'er I see thee near ;  
And shouldest thou be the theme  
Can rivals patient hear.

## V.

*Volgimi il guardo altero,  
Parlami in volto umano ;  
Il tuo disprezzo è vano,  
E' vano il tuo favor ;  
Che più l'usato impero  
Quei labri in me non hanno ;  
Quegli occhi più non fanno,  
La via di questo cor.*

Now if thou angry look,  
Or love and kindness feign ;  
Frowns undisturb'd I brook,  
And feel thy favour vain.  
Those lips, however kind,  
Have lost their magic art ;  
Nor can thine eyes now find  
The passage to my heart.

Quel,

## VI.

*Quel che or m'alletta, o piace,  
Se lieto, o mestio ci sono,  
Già non è più tuo dono,  
Già colpa tua non è;  
Che senza te mi piace  
La selva, il colle, il prato;  
Ogni soggiorno ingrato  
M'annoja ancor con te.*

What pain or pleasure gives,  
What joy or sorrow brings,  
From thee no good receives,  
From thee no evil springs.  
Without thee, I delight  
In woods and flow'ry meads ;  
And with thee, hate the sight  
Of barren fields and weeds.

## VII.

*Odi s'io son sincero ;  
Ancor mi sembra bella,  
Ma non mi sembri quella,  
Che paragon non ha.  
E (non l'offenda il vero)  
Nel tuo leggiadro aspetto  
Or vedo alcun difetto,  
Che mi parea belta.*

Nor does thy face, though fair,  
At present so excel,  
That I could safely swear  
It has no parallel.  
And let not truth offend,  
Should I to think incline  
Some features I could mend,  
Which once I thought divine.

## VIII.

*Quando lo stral spazzai,  
(Confesso il mio rossore)  
Spazzar m' intesi il core,  
Mi parve di morir.  
Ma per uscir di guai,  
Per non vederfi oppreso,  
Per racquistar se stesso  
Tosto si può soffrir.*

When first I drew the dart  
(With shame my cheek's on fire)  
Such torture tore my heart,  
I thought I should expire.  
But to relieve such pain,  
To fly oppression's sphere,  
And sway o'er self to gain,  
What suffering's too severe ?

## IX.

*Nel visco, in cui s'avvenne  
Quell'augellin talora,  
Lascia le penne ancora,  
Ma torna in libertà.  
Poi le perdute penne  
Il pochi dì rinnova,  
Canto d'aven per prova,  
Né più tradir si fa.*

When caught in viscous snare  
A bird, himself to free,  
Will some few feathers spare,  
To gain his liberty.  
But plumage will return ;  
Again he'll mount the skies ;  
Nor prudence has to learn,  
By sad experience wise.

## X.

*So che non credi affatto  
In me l'incidento antico,  
Percè si spesso il dico,  
Percè tacere non so.  
Quel naturale istinto,  
Nato, a parlar mi sprona,  
Per cui ciascun ragiona  
De' rischi che passò.*

But still I know thou'l't fay,  
My cure is not complete:  
At, though 'tis told each day,  
The tale I still repeat.  
My instinct is the same  
As that of men who roam,  
And with delight proclaim  
The dangers they've o'ercome,

## XI.

*Dopo il cradel cimento,  
Narrà i passati sdegni;  
Di sue ferite i segni,  
Mostra il guerrier così,  
Mostra così contento,  
Schiaruo ebe usci di pena,  
La barbara catena,  
Che strafinorva un dì.*

Thus soldiers when return'd  
Victorious from a war,  
Tell how they laurels earn'd,  
And proudly shew each scar.  
And thus the galley-slave  
Releas'd from cruel chains,  
On shackles still will rave  
And shew their deep remains.

## XII.

*Parlo, ma sol parlano,  
Me soddisfar procuro;  
Parlo, ma nulla in curo  
Che tu mi presti se.  
Parlo, ma non dimando  
Se approvi i detti miei;  
Ne se tranquilla sei  
Nel ragionar, di me.*

Of liberty I speak  
To please myself alone,  
But not thy peace to break  
Or to display my own.  
I speak, nor ask if now  
My reas'ning pleases thee;  
Nor care if calmly thou  
Canst bear to speak of me.

## XIII.

*Io lascio un' incoronante;  
Tu perdi un cor sincero;  
Non so di noi primiero,  
Chi s'abbia a consolar.  
So che un' fido amante  
Non troverà più Nise;  
Che un' altra ingannatrice  
E facile a trovar.*

I quit a fickle fair,  
Thou'l lose a heart that's true;  
Nor do I know or care  
Who most has cause to rue.  
But this I know, a swain  
So true will ne'er be found;  
But females false and vain  
Throughout the world abound.

There

There are two translations of this celebrated canzonet in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems*; several in French; and among the rest, one by Rousseau, which he set himself, three several times, to airs which are engraved in the posthumous collection of his songs. But among all the versions that I have seen, no one seems to have been attempted in the *same measure* as the original, or that can be applied to the music of any one of the composers by whom it has been set.

For the sake therefore of Metastasio's melody, this English translation, *totidem verbis*, has been attempted. Indeed the double Rhymes are still wanting for the Music, and the exact similitude of the numbers; but it seems hardly possible to find so many tolerable double Rhymes in our language as would be necessary, without degrading the verse into doggerel: as six out of eight lines in every stanza of the original, end with a diffsyllabic word.

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The Imperial Laureate's works were now sufficiently considerable to interest the booksellers throughout Italy; they had already been collected and published at Rome and Naples, but in an incorrect and inelegant manner. *Bettinelli*, an eminent printer at

Venice, opened a correspondence with Metastasio upon this subject, in 1732, soliciting his advice and assistance in preparing a new impreision. Besides smaller pieces, and three oratorios, his great operas amounted now to twelve. Metastasio's answers to the letters of Bettinelli have been preserved and inserted in the late collection, though most readers will, perhaps, think that they might have been suppressed without injury to the public interest, or the author's fame. And yet, the prose of Metastasio is so pure, clear, easy, and elegant, that the most short and unimportant of his letters are precious for the style, however unintereesting may be the subjects which produced them.

Dr. Johnson used to say, that the book-sellers were an author's best patrons; and Metastasio, though he had an Emperor for his prote&gt;ctor, seems to have treated Bettinelli with that consideration which he thought due to a benefactor. And, perhaps, no book-seller was addressed with more politeness by an author so high in station and public favour, since the invention of the press.

If, therefore, these letters to Bettinelli had no other merit than their urbanity, they may have their use, as models of good breeding between

between persons, who, regarding each other with mutual jealousy, are susceptible of all the irritability which that passion is apt to excite, in what ever form it assumes.

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## LETTER I.

TO SIG. JOSEPH BETINELLI.

SIR,

AFTER returning you due thanks for the undeserved confidence which you are pleased to manifest in the merit of my works, as well as for your obliging attention in communicating to me your plan, previous to its execution, I am bound in gratitude to dissuade you from the projected enterprise. My reasons are, that being at present in want of sufficient leisure to arrange and revise productions, which formerly with much impetuosity rather flew than came from my hands, they could make but an inconsiderable miscellany of things disapproved by myself, and to which, for the most part, the last polish is wanting. And if such an edition would suffice, you have been anticipated by Sig. Pietro Leoni, the bookseller at Rome, who has already printed a collection of all my poetry, to my own great sorrow,

without considering the objections just mentioned. If, however, you have no repugnance to suspend the execution of your plan for a short time, I should wish to collect, revise, and arrange all my poetical compositions; to write a treatise on the Italian drama, for which I have all the materials ready, and then publish a neat edition, in which we might mutually assist each other, But for such an undertaking, leisure (a scarce commodity with me at present) will be necessary.

However, by working a little at a time, during the intervals of my usual employment, I should not despair of accomplishing such a design. Assure yourself that I shall be much at your service, and that I am, with a due sense of my obligations to you, &c.

Vienna, June 14, 1732.

## LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

IT mortifies me extremely, not to be able to answer your most obliging solicitations, with that promptitude which they deserve. But my occupations at this court are so incessant, that I can procure no leisure for finishing

finishing what I planned in Italy : hence, the treatise I mentioned to you before, still remains in the same state ; and what is yet less promising, I see no likelihood of enjoying the necessary tranquillity for making it fit for the public eye.

But this does not appear to me an objection sufficient to prevent your preparing the impression of my dramatic works, which you had in meditation. I am however so little persuaded of their merit, that I should never have dared to advise such an undertaking ; and indeed you may remember that I took some pains to discourage it, by suggesting to you the difficulties which, in my opinion, you would have to encounter, and particularly those arising from the Roman edition. But if you persist in your resolution, and will relinquish the idea of waiting for the treatise, I can offer you no better service, than that of furnishing you with copies of those impressions of my dramas which were printed under my own eye, and correcting such errors as had escaped me and others before.

For this purpose, I have already given commission in Italy for collecting the opera books, which shall be sent to you as soon as possible.

possible. In the mean time, I should be glad to be informed of the size, paper, and character, in which this new edition is to be executed; the beauty and correctness of which, and a moderate number of copies, are all the rewards I propose to myself, for the trouble and inconvenience which I am willing to undertake.

Vienna, Feb. 28, 1733.

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### L E T T E R III.

TO THE SAME.

As soon as I had answered your last letter, I wrote to my brother *Leopoldo Metastasio*, at Rome, to use his utmost endeavours to find, for your use, all my poetical compositions; transmitting to him, at the same time, a paper of instructions for their arrangement, to be conveyed to you by any person whom you should appoint to receive them. But this is not the greatest difficulty. It is necessary for you to be informed, that the successors of *Baglioni* and *Carlo Buon-arrigo*, propose a similar plan. And without consulting me, have procured at Rome, copies of all my writings that have been hitherto published,

published. Now as I have no inedited work ready for publication, I cannot intimidate them by promising a more ample edition. You will make some use of this intelligence, I hope, which I communicate to you in honour, that you may avoid an expence, which, in all probability, will not turn out to your advantage. If, however, you still persist in your plan, you may depend on every assistance in my power to render it perfect; and, when completed, if you honour me with a few copies, I shall regard them as a free gift, and a testimony of your generosity and regard,

Vienna, April 18, 1733.

As this is the first edition of the works of Metastasio, in which the poet interested himself, we shall not wholly quit his correspondence with Betinelli, till its publication. After two other letters on the subject, he says in a third :

## L E T T E R IV.

### TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this morning received information from Naples, that Riccardi, the printer,  
has

has either finished, or will finish in a short time, a new impression of all my works that have been hitherto published; but in so confused, careless, and miserable a manner, that my friends at Naples, who are numerous, are extremely offended. I shall immediately write to different persons there, and desire them to inform the public of the neat edition which you are now printing, and of which you would do well to transmit thither a specimen. The inedited opera, at least, cannot be in the other edition, and there are many circumstances which will render yours infinitely superior.

Vienna, July 11, 1733.

## L E T T E R V.

### TO THE SAME.

I HAVE received a copy of the address to the public, in the proposals for a subscription, and shall make use of it. It is very well written, though with great partiality for me. It would give me pleasure to be informed who drew it up. I now send you *Ezio*, corrected by a friend, and next week, shall forward to you a new opera. You  
must

must not forget to send copies of your proposals to Rome and Naples, before the Neapolitan edition is further dispersed.

August 22, 1733.

Betinelli, about this time, seems to have lost a little ground in the favour of Metastasio, by hastily and carelessly printing *Didone* from an incorrect copy; and by the impetuosity with which the sheets of the new edition of his entire works, were working off.

" Your scrupulous punctuality with the public," says he, " like other excesses, counteracts itself: for by too much haste, you will do the public little good, and me less.

In your hurry, you have already forgot a correction which I sent you long since, with earnest entreaties that it might be attended to, and with which you promised to comply.

You know that all the world is in the practice of commerce, and mutually exchanging what they can spare, for what they want. You are bound to have the same regard for *my honour*, as I am bound to have for *your interest*. But I hope you will forgive my sincerity, if I say that, hitherto, it seems as

if you had neglected this rule in our correspondence, though the disinterested manner with which I treated you, certainly merited some return of attention.

" Notwithstanding this cause of complaint, on Saturday I shall send you *Catone*, corrected, with an almost total change of the third act, which you will print both ways, to distinguish your edition from all others. From this time, I shall every week send you something ready for the compositor, if you will but have patience; which, however, I little expect.

" I beg you to let me have as soon as possible, two copies of the first volume, with a print on good paper, to present to my August Patrons.

" Excuse the poetical frankness with which I have written, and believe me equally sincere in offering you my best services."

In November, he says: " I now send you another opera, which will be the last; as, with this, we shall conclude the collection of operas, and begin to print the other pieces. It does not seem to me, as if there would be materials sufficient for another volume, unless, contrary to my inclination, you print the compositions of my early and  
inexpe-

inexperienced youth, which I have long disapproved. You must explain yourself clearly on this subject, that I may take my measures accordingly.

"I thank you for the copies which you have sent me bound, for their Imperial Majesties, and I hope, when I have time to examine them, that I shall still find new cause for thanks."

In the next letter, he tells Betinelli, that he had read the proof-sheets of these dramatic pieces, and found so little to correct, that it seemed a useless expence of postage, to send them back. Of three of these dramas, he gives the following account.

*La Contesa de' Nomi,*

"The contention of the Gods,"

Was set by Vinci, and performed at Rome, in the Palace of Cardinal Polignac, the French Ambassador, on the birth of the Dauphin, 1729.

*Enea nell' Elysie,*

"Æneas in the Elysian Fields, or

The Temple of Eternity,"

Set by Fouchs, was sung in the Garden of the Imperial Palace, called the *Favourite*, in celebration of the Emperor's birth-day, 1731.

*L' Afis*



*L' Asilo d' Amore*  
 "The Asylum of Love."

This dramatic entertainment, set by Caldara, was represented at Lintz, August 28th, 1732, in celebration of the birth-day of the Empress, who was present at the performance.

For the orthography, he advises the corrector of the press, to follow that of Facciolati, printed for the use of the Seminary, at Padua, which he likes better than any other. All Metastasio's opinions in literature, seem worth recording.

"Next week, (he says,) I shall send you my Oratorios, which now amount to five. These have been collected into a volume at Vienna; but are so ill-printed, that I am ashamed to present them to my August Patron."

This edition was not finished till 1734. It was terminated by the following pieces, which made a seventh volume,

*Angelica*, a Serenata, written at Naples, 1722. *La Morte di Catone*, a Poem in *Terza Rima*, not intended for music.

*L' Origine delle Legge*; the same.

"These compositions, says Metastasio, are, in my opinion, so feeble, that I have not

not had courage to re-peruse them, through the dread of the pain it would give me to recollect that they were going to be laid before the public, who, in reading them, will not always remember, in my excuse, the time of life in which they were written." He constantly recommended to every subsequent Editor of his works, to place these Poems, in a separate, and last volume.

The Poet seems to have been much pleased, in general, with Betinelli's attention, while this edition was printing; and says in a letter to him, dated April 10th, 1734. " I have received the last sheet of the third volume, and return you due thanks, not only for that, but for the grateful and obliging sentiments, which, by magnifying the little that I have contributed towards the new impression, you have been pleased to express.

" Indeed you have now made me so much wish to merit the praises which you bestow, that I beg you will afford me some further opportunity of obeying your commands.

" I send you the last Oratorio, which I have written (*e*). This, of all my sacred dramas,

(*e*) This must have been *Betulia liberata*, which was set by Reutter, for the Imperial Chapel, in 1734.

is that with which I am the least displeased. I transmit a copy of it to you, that you may dispose of it in such a manner as shall be most useful to you."

This impression must have had a very rapid sale, as we find Metastasio in correspondence with the same publisher, in July of the same year, on the subject of another edition.

" I return you my sincere thanks, for the obliging attention with which you are pleased to treat me, in advertising me of your intended new edition of my works; and I wish it the same fate with the preceding, as a reward for your solicitude and care. I cannot but approve of your intention, having already had such proofs of your prudence, as incline me to think that you have well weighed all circumstances previous to the undertaking."

A few days after this was written, Metastasio sent Betinelli the following letter of thanks, for a pamphlet which he had transmitted to him, in which his *Opera of Demofonte*, was very severly treated.

## LETTER VI.

TO SIGNOR BETINELLI.

How much am I obliged to you, for the care which you have kindly taken in transmitting to me the learned reflections on my *Demofoonte*. If I had leisure to reply, the chief part of my answer would consist of sentiments of gratitude to the writer: so much higher does he think of my labours than I do myself.

I have run it through hastily, between the time of receiving and answering it; but I shall frequently repeat the perusal, no less for the discovery of my faults, than the improvement of my style. Oh, what instruction should I not receive, if the author would publish the Tragedy which he promises! From the study of its perfections, I might more clearly see my own errors, even those which he has neglected to specify; thinking it sufficient to inform his readers, that such existed, and contenting himself with exemplary charity, to allow, that I had purposely admitted many of the irregularities with which the piece abounds.

The parts of the pamphlet that you have sent me, in which the author descends to particulars, contain reflections on the inconsistency of the characters of *Timanthes*, and *Creusa*, and a parallel between Signor Apostolo Zeno and myself. As to the first, perhaps he is right ; though I believe, that a person may act differently in different situations, without inconsistency of character. *Timanthes*, is a valiant young man, subject to the emotions of youth, though naturally reasonable, and furnished by education with maxims suitable to persons of his rank. When assaulted by passion, he is impetuous, violent, and inconsiderate. But when he has time to reflect, or any object present, reminds him of his duty, he is just, moderate, and rational. And in the whole course of the drama, that contrast always appears, which arises either from the conflicting operations of the mind and heart, or of impetuosity and reason. Thus Tasso has drawn Rinaldo. When passion transports him, he says of Godfrey :

*Venga egli, o mandi : io terrò fermo il piede :  
Giudice sian tra noi la sorte, è l'arme :  
Fera tragedia ei vuol, che s'appresenti,  
Per lor d'porto, alle nemiche genti.*

Then

Then let him come,—I here shall firm abide,  
 And arms and fate between us shall decide :  
 Soon shall our strife in sanguine torrents flow,  
 A prospect grateful to the gazing foe !

*Hoole's Transl. of Tasso:*

But when he has time to reflect, in cool  
 blood, he says to the same Godfrey :

*E s'io n'offesi te, ben disconforto  
 Ne sentii pofcia, e penitenza al cuore ;  
 Or vengo a' tusi richiami, ed ogni emenda  
 Son pronto a far, che grato a te mi renda.*

Too late convinc'd, the rash offence I own ;  
 And deep contrition since my foul has known,  
 By thee recall'd, I seek the camp again ;  
 And may my future deeds thy grace obtain.

*Hoole.*

The same rule, in different proportion, has been observed in the character of *Creusa*; a Princess wholly governed by the vanity of high rank and beauty. Offended by *Timanthes*, unexpectedly, in both, without a moment's time for reflection, she breaks out into a desire of vengeance; but after the first emotion, she not only gives it up, but discovers it to be ill-founded, and is impelled by her reason, as in justice she ought to be, to pity the very person, whom her revenge was pursuing.

This does not appear to me, inconsistency of character, but diversity of situation, without which, every character would be insipid and improbable. What man is always calm and reasonable, or agitated, and violent? The first would be a divinity, the second a wild beast. From the contrast of these two universal principles, reason and passion, arises the diversity in the characters of men, as each of these, or both prevail.

And this concurrence of different principles in the same person, reconciles the valour of Æneas with the tears he so frequently sheds; the transports of Dido, with the good sense of a foundress of an Empire; and justify Orlando,

*Che per amor venne in furore, e matto,  
D' uom, che si saggio era stimato prima.*

“ Who once the flower of arms, and wisdom’s boast,  
By fatal love his manly senses lost.”

*Hooke’s Ariosto.*

But shall I communicate to you an idea that has struck me? I believe the very learned author of the reflections, does not think precisely as he writes. I suppose him to be rather a man of pleasantry, who, in order to amuse himself, tries to foment a poetical quarrel between Signor Zeno and me, for

the diversion of being himself a spectator of our comedy. - The parallel, which is the second, but principal part of his letter, is manifestly written with that intention.

But in this particular, I do not find myself at all disposed to gratify him. I feel the greatest esteem and respect for the worthy Signor Zeno; and I know that he returns my regard with equal friendship. Therefore assure every one who speaks to you on the subject, that I say no less myself of our dear Apostolo, than the author of these considerations has written of him; and that, proud of having been thought a fit subject of such a parallel, I most readily join on his side.

I know not whence the report that my Oratorio of *Gioas*, was in imminent danger of suppression, could have arisen. It was re-printed at Rome, and no one ever wrote me word, that there was any thing in it that gave offence; nor can I conceive what it could be, unless some passage had been tortured with malignity, into a sense that was never intended by the writer: and in that case the Evangelists themselves are not safe from heresy. I see not the least foundation for this report; and therefore cannot discover why you should hesitate inserting in

your edition of my works, one of the least imperfect of my labours.

I never wrote a satire in my life, nor ever will write one. I detest this kind of composition, and am so ill furnished with the requisite bile and malice for such productions, that if I attempted them, they would never be read. You may therefore safely say, that whoever ascribes any such writings to me, is guilty of an atrocious falsehood.

In other respects, my style has its peculiar character, and intelligent readers will not be easily deceived.

If you have a mind to give my opinion of the reflections on *Demofonte*, which you have sent me, you may do it freely; but there will be an end of our friendship, if this letter, or a copy of it, should ever be published in any manner whatever.

I know not what I have written in this hasty manner; and I have other cogent reasons for not wishing to know.

I beg to have the original, or a copy, of this letter returned, as I have no time for transcription,

Vienna, July 23, 1734.

Our

Our Laureat's employments at the Imperial Court, for the Carnival of 1734, are recorded in his familiar letters to an intimate friend at Rome, who had sent him an account of the theatrical preparations in that city, for the same Carnival.

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## LETTER VII.

TO SIGNOR GIUSEPPE PERONI.

IN spite of the very moderate preparations for the performance of my two Operas at Rome, the mere mention of our theatres, brings instantly to view our wags and busy little *Abate*, the contention of singers, the ardor of faction, the variety of opinions, and the universal bustle of the season. It makes me as restless as a Barbary-horse, just going to start. And if public circumstances could give way to private, I should certainly have obtained permission this year to have breathed for a short time paternal air, and to wash off in the Tyber, the rust and impurities with which I am insensibly covered by the constant smoke of these stoves; but as that happiness is at present impossible, I

must accommdate myself to the world, since the world will not accommodate itself to me. You are sufficiently used to theatrical conflicts to remain a quiet spectator on such occasions. But I should wish that Bulgarini, would keep away, lest his zeal should involve him in some disagreeable situation, in case my Operas should be unfortunate. But *à propos* to Roman news, I have received none by the last post, either from him or my brother; and am unable to account for the failure. It certainly is not the fault of the post, as I have had other letters from Rome. Knowing how constantly I inform them by every post of the state of my health, their want of punctuality is the more strange, as their trouble, by my own consent, is alternate, and consequently less than mine, who am alone. Remember, when you meet, to give them a fraternal remonstrance in my name,

Vienna, Jan. 8, 1734.

L E T-

## LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

NOTWITHSTANDING the extreme late arrival of the post, which allows me no time for answering, I shall, at least, by its return, acknowledge the receipt of your letter. You have made me laugh at the minute description of our Brunette, and I fancied myself present.

I thank you for the circumstantial account which you have sent me, of the rehearsal of the *Olimpiade*, and you will afford me equal pleasure by informing me truly of its reception, what ever it may be.

Yesterday, I saw the Nina Caldara, fair as a jonquille, but not quite so fresh. She, as well as her most corpulent spouse, send you salutation for salutation.

Vienna, Jan. 22, 1734.

## LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

AT length I have time to write you a few lines. I have been so busy, during the Carnival, as not to have a moment which I could call my own. Besides my usual occupations, I have been obliged, in the greatest

eff

est haste, to write an entertainment, which their Most Serene Highnesses the Arch-duchesses have performed in music ; and to instruct, direct, and assist them, which has solely absorbed all my time.

But in truth, it is a pleasure which no other can equal, to have such an opportunity of seeing and admiring the excellent qualities of these august Princesses. I should not else have believed it possible to meet with such attention, docility, patience, and gratitude. Oh, how many people, of the sixteenth rank, have I known, who were not possessed of the thousandth part of the courtesy of these incomparable personages ! They have acted and sung like angels, and it was truly sacrilege, that the whole world was not permitted to admire them ; for the festival was extremely private, as none but the Vienna ladies of the highest rank, were able to obtain admission, and even these were in masks. As a return for instructing their Serene Highnesses, I was presented with a gold snuff-box, of about fourscore *Hungberi* (near 40l.) in weight, but the workmanship is of much more value (*f*). I have

(*f*) This little dramatic poem was called *Le Grazie Vendicate*, set by Caldara, and performed by the two Arch-duchesses,

I have given you this account, from well knowing how much you interest yourself in what ever concerns me.

My pleasure in the success of *Demofoonte* at Rome, would have been more perfect, if it had not been imbibited by the disgrace of poor *Ciampi* (g), who, however, considering how much sentences of this kind depend upon fortune, should be no more afflicted at the ill success of his music, than I ought to be vain of the favourable reception of my poem. Theatrical matters are subject to so many accidents, that it would be an unpardonable temerity to pretend to guard against them all.

Vienna, Feb. 26, 1734.

### L E T T E R X.

TO THE SAME.

THE pleasure which you manifest at the great success of my *Demofoonte*, pleases me no less than the circumstance itself. I see clearly that you exult as sincerely as if dutchesses, Maria Theresa, afterwards Empress Queen, and her sister Marianna, with another Lady of the Court.

(g) This was not the *Ciampi* who came to England in 1748, but a more correct and masterly composer. See *Hist. Mus.* vol. iv. p. 538.

it

it were a production of your own ; and the interest you take in my affairs is no less a proof of the sincerity of your friendship, than the goodness of your heart. I return you my best thanks, and assure you of a reciprocal regard.

I am obliged to be short, as well as yourself; not in revenge, but in imitation of your prudence, and for want of the too common abilities of knowing how to fill a letter with nothing.

Vienna, March 5, 1734.

The grand opera for the Emperor's birthday, this year, was *La Clemenza di Tito*, set by Caldara. This, as well as every preceding drama, written by Metastasio, was soon brought on the stage in the principal cities of Italy ; and was set by Leo, for Venice, in 1735.

It seems as if the character and court of the Emperor Charles VI. had directed the muse of Metastasio, to chuse a virtuous prince for the principal hero of most of the musical dramas that were represented in the Imperial Theatre. The Emperor was a religious Prince, and a rigid observer of decorum himself, which consequently kept licentious-

ness

ness at a distance from his court. And the Poet, naturally a friend to virtue and morality, seems to have gratified his own feelings, by conforming to the serious sentiments of his Imperial Patron.

In 1735, he produced the little opera called, *Le Cinesi*, for three characters only, by command of the Empress Elizabeth, as an introduction to a Chinese *Balet*: it was afterwards performed, during the Carnival, in the apartments of the Imperial palace, to music by Reutter, by the two Archduchesses, Maria-Teresa, and Marianna, with a lady of the court (*b*).

*Il Palladio conservato* was set by Reutter, for the Empress Elizabeth's birth-day, and performed by the two Archduchesses.

*Il Sogno di Scipione*, written for the fortunate campaign of the Austrians in Italy, was set by *Prediere*, and performed in the Imperial palace, for the birth-day of the Emperor Charles VI. by order of the Empress Elizabeth.

(*b*) This little Drama was revived in 1753, at the castle of the Prince of SAXEN HILBURGHAUSEN, by professed musicians, for the entertainment of the Emperor FRANCIS I. and the Empress MARIA-Teresa, with an additional character.

The

The pieces written for the celebration of the birth-days of the Emperor and Empress, were a species of birth-day odes, but always in a dramatic form, in which the praise was delicately disguised, in a fable or allegory.

Our author was still in correspondence with the printer Betinelli, who had been so successful in publishing his works, that he became importunate in his solicitations for every new production that came from his pen. And hearing of a new opera for the Emperor's birth-day this year, he pressed him for a copy, to add to his other works that were printed at Venice. To this last request Metastasio wrote the following answer.

## LETTER XI.

TO SIGNOR BETINELLI.

THOUGH I am convinced that you do me great honour, whenever you are pleased to ask for any of my compositions, yet so numerous are the solicitations which I receive, on every occasion of a new production, that being wholly unable to satisfy them all, I find it most expedient to comply with none. As it is ~~so~~ inconvenient to be at my ease and

and gain no friends, than to make enemies by trouble and fatigue. My dear Betinelli is so reasonable, that he will not, I hope, dispute the rectitude, or at least, the convenience, of my sentence; and, consequently, will not think I act injudiciously, if I do not furnish him with the drama he desires.

Of the pieces which I have written this year, none will be published so soon as we thought. That which I have just finished, will not be acted before St. Charles's day (the 4th of Nov.) as the court is lately gone into mourning for the Prince of *Bevern*, cousin to the present Empress; so that I can say nothing positive on the subject.

Vienna, Oct. 1, 1735.

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The opera to which he alludes, was *The-mistocles*, which, though set by Caldara, and ready for representation, was not exhibited till the Carnival of 1736. But while this was performing, Metastasio had another task assigned him, the difficulties of which he frequently related to his friends, many years after.

In writing to Betinelli during this time, he says: "I send to you, my ever obliging friend, a copy of the opera (*Achille in Sciro*)

which I have been obliged to write for the nuptials of her most serene Highness, the Archduchess Teresa, in eighteen days and a half. Three months, which I used to allow myself for writing an opera, were never sufficient to finish it to my mind; imagine whether it was possible to satisfy myself with this."

To his friend Perroni, he sends a more minute account of this precipitate drama.

" I shall not give you a detail of the celebration of the august nuptials here, lately, as they are described in all the letters and news-papers of the time. I shall only say, that I never was so embarrassed in my life, as on this occasion. I was commanded to write an opera in eighteen days and a half: a short space of time indeed; for I never allowed myself less than three months for the same kind of work; and I still tremble at the task, even though it is performed; however, it has answered the purpose; and my most august Master, as well as the new married couple, and all the court, allowing perhaps for the risk I ran by such precipitation, have shewn as much favour to this species of abortion, as if it had been a regular birth. His Serene Highness the Duke of Lorrain,

in testimony of approbation, has presented me with a ring, formed of one brilliant, worth four or five hundred *Ungberi*, according to the opinion of the learned in such matters. This is a great mark of distinction, not only as it exceeds my merit, but because none of my predecessors ever received any particular gratification on similar occasions (i).

The admirable opera of *Ciro Riconoscuto*, was a production of this period, and likewise set by Caldara.

It seems as if 1737 had been a sabbatical year, for our author and his muse; for none of his poetical works bear that date, nor do any of his letters, of that period, appear in the collection.

In 1738 he produced *La pace fra la Virtù, e la Bellezza*, a theatrical piece of one act, set by *Prediere*, for the name-day of the Archduchess Maria Teresa, afterwards Empress Queen; and *Il Parnaso accusato, e difeso*, which was set by *Reutter*, and performed by the two Archduchesses. These

(i) The Poet related to the author of these memoirs, at Vienna, in 1772, his distress, and the manner in which he extricated himself on this occasion. See *Present State of Music in Germany, &c.* vol. i. Art. Vienna.

and many other occasional dramas, though elegantly written, have not been of that general use in other parts of Europe, which fell to the lot of most of his operas, for want of more length and characters. The fame of our author having, however, by this time, been extended to every part of the globe, where the Italian language and poetry were understood, could not fail penetrating to the city of *Affisi*; the birth-place of his father. And we find among the letters of Metastasio, written this year, the two following, which will explain themselves.

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## LETTER XII.

## TO THE MAGISTRATES OF ASSISI.

I SHALL not undertake to expres to you, my illustrious countrymen (*k*), the effect which your most flattering letter has had on my heart, in which you have been pleased to inform me that I have been admitted to the

(*k*) Metastasio, though born at Rome, calls the inhabitants of *Affisi* his countrymen; not only, perhaps, from its being the birth-place of his ancestors, but likewise, a city belonging to the Roman State.

rank

rank of nobility among your citizens. The intrinsic value of so precious a gift, the unsolicited liberality with which it has been bestowed, the public attention in notifying it, the assurance of my being unanimously honoured with your approbation, are such motives of satisfaction, gratitude, sensibility, and, let me add, of shame for my unworthiness, as have impressed me with emotions that are utterly out of my power to describe. Would to heaven my merit may ever be such as shall sufficiently apologise to posterity for your partiality! It will, at least, be an honourable and powerful stimulus to that desire of fame, which I have hitherto cherished; and render me doubly ambitious, that the memory of my gratitude may not be extinguished, even with my life.

Vienna, Nov. 22, 1738.

### L E T T E R XIII.

TO SIG. ANGELINI DI ASSISI.

THE aggregation among the noble citizens of Assisi, which was conferred on me the 15th of October last, has overpowed me with confusion, at so unexpected and im-

M 3 portant

portant an honour; to which my ambition, having no foundation in hope, had never suffered me to aspire. The obliging eagerness and zeal with which you have been pleased to congratulate me on this occasion, sufficiently manifest the active part you have had in procuring me this most valuable acquisition. I beg you will explain to all those most worthy counsellors, beginning with yourself, and to all who have approved of the measure, what a high sense I have of the honour that has been done me. Describe to them, in the most respectful expressions, my grateful sense of their condescension, and assure them, severally, that no less jealous than proud of so great a distinction, it will always be my ambition not to disgrace so illustrious a body, to whom I have already forwarded my public acknowledgments. I entreat you, Sir, to continue to me your most valued friendship and patronage, and to afford me frequent occasions of manifesting with what regard and esteem I have the honour to be, &c.

Vienna, Nov. 28, 1738.

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It does not appear that our author produced any other drama in 1739, than *Af-trea*

*tre a Placata*, of one act only, set by Prediere, for the Empress Elizabeth's birth-day. He did not, however, suffer his muse to remain idle: as it appears by his posthumous works, that he translated the III. satire of Juvenal. Boileau did the same in 1660, and Dr. Johnson in 1738.

" Three Poets in three distant regions born,  
" France, Italy, and England did adorn."

Metastasio, like our Dryden, translated closely; pointing, like the original author, all the satire against the city of Rome; but Boileau applied it to Paris; and Johnson to LONDON. Metastasio, the same year, translated the VI. satire of Horace; not in *versi sciolti*, or blank verse, which he had made use of for Juvenal; but in *Terza Rima*, the measure of Dante.

Few of his letters of this year are preserved, except that to his father, which has been already inserted, and one to Betinelli, of no great consequence.

In 1740, however, he was less inactive, or his dramatic muse more propitious. For besides the opera of *Zenobia*, which was set by Caldara; and the oratorio of *Isacco*, by Prediere, he wrote *Il natal di Giove*,

*Giove*, a drama of one act, set by Bonno (1), and a canzonet for a dance of Rustics, which was performed in the Imperial court, to music of Bonno, the last Sunday in the Carnival of this year, by their Royal Highnesses the two Archduchesses of Austria, Mary Teresa, and Marianne, and the ladies of their court. He likewise wrote, this year, the opera of *Attilio Regolo* for the birthday of the Emperor Charles VI.; but that Prince dying before it had been represented, it was laid aside, and not performed, till 1750, when it was set by Hasse, for the court of Dresden.

Our author laments the ~~the~~ death of his Imperial Patron, with great sensibility, in

## LETTER XIV.

TO A FRIEND.

YESTERDAY, at half an hour past one o'clock, my most August Master, Charles VI. breathed his last. I need say no more, to convince you of my extreme affliction.

(1) Of this composer we shall have further occasion to speak hereafter.

The

The last days of his preeious life have made us know the weight of our misfortune, as there was not a moment in which he did not give testimonies of his piety, fortitude, and affection, for his people. He fulfilled to the last moment, the part of a Prince and a Hero. My tears, which have never been more justly shed, prevent me from lengthening this letter. I am so oppressed with the view of this public calamity, that, as yet, I am unable to examine the circumstances of my own. His illness, which was an inflammation in his stomach, but ill understood by his physicians, lasted seven days and some hours. I beg of you to implore the Supreme Being to grant me that firmness, which, at present, I so deplorably want (m).

Before this event happened, Metastasio wrote to Betinelli in a more gay humour.

(m) There is no date to this letter: it may therefore be necessary to remind the reader, that the Emperor Charles VI. father of the late Empress Queen, was born in 1685, declared King of Spain by his father in 1703, crowned Emperor of Germany 1711, and died in October, 1740.

## LETTER XV.

You forget me, my dear Bettinelli; and I, in revenge, am determined to remember you. In my last letter, I sent you a small bill of exchange, desiring you to give me advice of its safe arrival, and to tell me whether the printing the works of Guarini goes on, as I am a subscriber. But you have done neither one nor the other; and yet I send you my *Isaac*, which was sung last Tuesday in the Imperial Chapel. I hope to disturb your sleep, and to deserve to be favoured, in return, with your commands.

Vienna, April 15, 1740.

But in the beginning of the next year, he wrote to him in a very different disposition.

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## LETTER XVI.

YOUR pathetic and obliging letter, my dear Bettinelli, is an ingenious reproach for my silence. I confess to you, that unless driven to it by necessity, it is with great difficulty that I can bring myself to use the pen. An employment which, though useful in

in civil life, I can follow at present to little purpose. There was no mystery in my silence. My melancholy inaction has deprived me of the means of sending you, as usual, my new productions. The loss of my Patron has made me almost forget myself, as well as others. The completion of the new edition of Greek and Roman Classics, has broke the only thread by which our correspondence was held together ; and yet you wonder that I have ceased to write ? However, I thank you for complaining, which I regard as a testimony of your friendship ; and I assure you, that I am not in the least changed with respect to my esteem for you ; and I promise to give you proofs of it, whenever opportunity offers. In order that this letter may not be wholly without some little matter of busines, I beg that you will send me, by the first opportunity, a copy of the additions to my works which you have printed ; in which are contained *Afrea Placata*, and *Il Sogno di Scipione*. At the same time, inform me of the price, and believe me to be invariably yours.

Vienna, March 18, 1741.

END OF THE FOURTH SECTION.

## S E C T I O N V.

THE decease of Metastasio's Imperial Patron Charles VI. which was occasioned by the poison, or indigestion, of mushrooms, at the age of fifty-five, proved a calamity to all Europe, by the general war which immediately followed. This Prince, the fifth son of the Emperor Leopold, had succeeded his brother, the Emperor Joseph, in 1711; and dying without male issue, his eldest daughter, Maria Theresa, succeeded him, as Queen of Hungary and Bohemia; but her consort, the Duke of Lorrain, and afterwards, Grand Duke of Tuscany, was at this time an unsuccessful candidate for the Empire, which was obtained by the French arms and intrigues, for the Duke of Bavaria, by the name of Charles VII. His predecessor had not been dead two months, before the King of Prussia invaded Silesia. In January 1741, Charles VII. was elected Emperor. At the same time, the Queen of Hungary was obliged to quit Vienna, which was threatened with a siege, and throw herself into the

arms

arms of her hereditary subjects at Presburg. This war continuing in Germany, and the rest of Europe, with various success, till the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, afforded the Royal Mistress of Metastasio and her court, little opportunity, or appetite, for being amused by the peaceful arts of poetry and music.

Upon the death of the Emperor Charles VII. after a most turbulent and unhappy reign of four years, her Consort the Grand Duke of Tuscany, was elected Emperor, in 1745, by the title of Francis the First; but the war still continuing, the Imperial Laureate was seldom called upon to exercise his talents.

The only proof remaining of his commerce with the Muses in 1741, is *L'Amor Prigioniero*, a little drama set by Reutter, for a private performance at court, consisting only of two characters, and one scene. For the year 1742, there is a total blank. And in 1743, he seems only to have produced *Il vero omaggio*, a short poetical dialogue set to music by Bonno, and sung on the birth-day of the Arch-duke Joseph, the late Emperor.

However, fortune became now somewhat less adverse to the Austrians, than the two

ceding years, and according to Metastasio's Vienna, was not without its amusements during the Carnival.

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## LETTER I.

TO THE MARQUIS CHARLES CAVALLI,  
di RAVENNA.

How can I sufficiently thank you, my dear Marquis, for the matchless kindness with which you have been pleased to honour me, in a testimony of your remembrance, so unexpected, yet ardently desired? Indeed there was occasion for a medicine no less efficacious, to alleviate my affliction at the distance between us. I am extremely pleased to hear that you have found in Ravenna such a considerable number of true lovers of literature. The commerce with such people, must furnish you with agreeable amusement; and your cultivated and happy talents will be in no want of a stimulus or a theatre.

Here every one is immersed in the pleasures of the Carnival. The Plays, Games, Balls, Ridottos, and Maquerades, are innumerable; and though, from my natural disposition,

position, situation, and circumstances, I am unable to partake of them, I nevertheless rejoice in the joy of others. Divert yourself in our charming Italy, and in some intervals of your happiness, remember that I am with the most sincere and respectful esteem, &c.

Vicana, Jan. 5, 1743.

In 1744, we find two Operas, and one little Drama of his writing, but very few letters. The Operas were *IPERMESTRA*, written by command, and set by Hasse, for Vienna (*n*), and *ANTIGONO*, written for the Court of Dresden, and likewise set by Hasse. It is the only drama which he seems to have produced for any other theatre than that of Vienna, since his appointment to the Imperial Laureatship. *Ipermestra* was set the same year by Bertoni for Venice, at a very early period of his life. The beautiful little Drama, entitled *La Danza*, consisting only of one scene, set by Bonno, was performed

(*n*) The Poet himself told me, that *IPERMESTRA* was written upon very short notice, to be performed, at first, in private, at Court, by great Personages; but, it was soon after publicly represented by professed Musicians, in celebration of the Nuptials of an Archduchess, with Prince Charles of Lorrain. See above, p. 115. and *Germ. Tour. Art. Vienna.*

by a gentleman and lady, of the Court of Vienna. Two letters to his father, and one to the Abate Pasquini, at that time the Italian dramatic Poet in the service of the Court of Dresden, are all the letters of this year that have been preserved.

The Abate Pasquini, had been recommended to the Court of Dresden, by Metastasio; who appears, by the letters, which he addressed to this Poet, to have interested himself much in his success. The correspondence continued to the time of Pasquini's death, in 1763. The following is the first letter to him, that has been preserved.

## L E T T E R II.

### TO THE ABATE PASQUINI, IN DRESDEN.

AND is the tender conscience of my dear Abate Pasquini, at length touched! If this had happened towards Easter, I should have had a penitential sermon, to have thanked you for; but arriving in all the fervor and gaiety of the Carnival, it is truly an exquisite morsel, so much the more delicious, as it was wholly unexpected. But to have done with

with my fooleries, I beg of you, seriously, not to imagine that I was so unreasonable, as to think our friendship affected, in the least, by your long and obstinate silence. I know your hurry and impetuosity, and have a thousand times forgot the tempest of my own affairs, in thinking of those in which my friend was involved. But your present tranquillity may compensate for all your former agitation. It affords me the most heart-felt pleasure, and I sincerely assure you, that few events could happen which could give me equal delight. Your zealous assistance to my poor *Antigono*, has infinitely more obliged than surprised me. I expected no less from the goodness of your heart, the probity of which I am proud of having always had discernment sufficient to distinguish, through those little vapours from the trembling fountain, which have sometimes made you doubt of my friendship. When you begin again to touch the Lyre, I beg you will not forget me. But you must not think me such a precious coxcomb, as to accept the poetical supremacy to which your friendship would wish to elect me.

It is your generosity that has made me the hero of one of your discourses, of which

the fruit is common to both; and I know better than you, that your happy talents are equal to any flight, if not repressed from time to time, by the little confidence you have in your own powers: an infirmity, however, for which I vainly seek a remedy myself.

Oh, how much I envy you the company of Signor Hasse, and Signora Faustina, his consort! they are truly an exquisite couple; embrace them both for me, and assure them, that they cannot bestow on me a more tender affection, than that which I have conceived for them. But in executing this commission, do not forget how much I love, esteem, and sincerely wish to serve you.

Vienna, Feb. 15, 1744.

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Our author's poetical productions in 1746, consist only of his two beautiful *Canzonette*, *LA PARTENZA*, and *LA PALINODIA A NICE*, thirteen years after he had so piously and elegantly thanked the gods for discovering to him her infidelities, in his *Grazie agli inganni tuoi*.

No letter of 1745, or of 1746, seems to have been preserved, except the following.

LET-

## LETTER III.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI, SECRETARY OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TURIN.

NOTHING less than the powerful efficacy of my most respected friend, the Marquis of Ormea, was necessary to obtain for me an excellent and long wished-for letter from the ungrateful, forgetful, inhuman, and yet, notwithstanding all that, the most amiable Signor Filipponi. I have neglected no occasion of reminding him of our friendship; I even had recourse to the friars, in order to procure a reciprocal return; but all in vain. I must confess, that, sometimes, transported by mingled anger and affection, I have hardly been able to refrain from breaking with him, and calling him by the injurious names of Anthropophagus, Troglodite, Lestrigon, and Pandour. Nor do I know to what excess I should at length have been transported, if your letter had not opportunely arrived, to appease my irascibility.

But it has not only appeased, it has awakened in my mind, a croud of delightful me-

mentos of laughable adventures, at school, in our walks, chats, disputes, and festivities ; the *Vomero*, *chiaja*, *Giulia Street*, *Porto del popolo*, and innumerable other places. It has penetrated the most hidden, and feeling parts of my heart, and rekindled the very ancient flame of tender friendship. But as there is no sweet, in this life, unmixed with bitter, so the unfamiliar and formal style with which you address me, in the third person, as if the dignity of secretary of a royal university, or of Imperial Laureate, could prevail over that of friendship, has deprived me of no small portion of the pleasure which your letter would otherwise have given me. I hope you sincerely repent of this at your heart, and have made a vow never again to be guilty of such sacrilege ; and taking this for granted, for this once I forgive you.

I have no doubt of the interest which you take in the honourable circumstances of fortune, to which, according to my moderate expectations, I have found no difficulty in limiting my desires ; and am grateful for it, as well as for the reputation to which the number of my friends has more contributed, than the weight of my merit. And assure yourself, that I am equally delighted with

the

the justice that has been rendered to you, by so enlightened, glorious, and universally admired a Prince, as the sovereign into whose service you have been received. A fate the more enviable, as every day convinces us more and more, that Prophets are seldom honoured in their own country.

It is most certain, that I ardently wish to make an excursion to Turin, when the public tranquillity for which we so much sigh, and my most august Princes, will permit; chiefly to have it to boast, that I have seen and venerated a Monarch, who by the unanimous consent of all Europe, has combined the qualities of King, Soldier, Citizen, and Father; and I shall certainly do it sometime or other, and avail myself of your most obliging offers, of which I have a due sense, as well as of those of our most worthy Marquis of Ormea, to whom I hold myself previously engaged. Besides the qualities of heart and mind, in which nature has been prodigal to this noble friend, and the many others for which he is indebted to education and experience, there are public titles which have no less claims to my respect and affection, than to the universal esteem and love which he has acquired in this Court. It is

impossible for me to explain all the private obligations for which he is intitled to my reverence and gratitude. Hence I hope you will not exact from me a compliance, which would render me less worthy of your friendship.

But my letter is already of a length sufficient to punish you for your long silence : I begin to have compassion upon you ; and so, not to wear you out entirely, as, on account of your being a married man it might prejudice a third person, I embrace you tenderly ; and beg of you to preserve your health for my sake, and to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, March 5, 1746.

This correspondence continued, with great affection till 1755.

In 1747, were written the three following letters.

#### L E T T E R      IV.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

IT is sometime since I began to make use of the recipe which you were so kind as to commu-

communicate to me in your letter of the 21st of January; though, hitherto, with little success. I have therefore discontinued taking it for a short time, to avoid being thought capricious, obstinate, and a disgrace to the whole venerable faculty of medicine, as well as to myself. Hence the prescription furnishes me with more gratitude than hope. If you should have a small portion of patience to spare, pray communicate it to me, as that is the sole pharmacy I want to enable me to support expectation from time, which is so alert an enemy, and so slow a benefactor.

You exult at our situation in Italy, and I perhaps from an hypocondriac habit, can neither think of it with joy nor tranquillity. I see no cause for triumph at Genoa nor on the Var. Neither am I convinced that we have nothing to fear in Provence and Naples; I know not what we can hope from maritime assistance; nor do I know what to wish, as to the limitations or extension of our enterprise. In short, I know so little, that in this abyss of ignorance, I have resolved to be carried down into the hold of this most agitated bark, of which I am on board; and when the storm is over, if it should please

God to put an end to it during my life, I shall raise my head, and cry out, *where are we?*

I thank you for the partial judgment which you have passed on my *Antigono*, and *Ipermestra*. I was obliged to write the latter in eighteen days, by a royal command; so that I had hardly time sufficient allowed me for transcribing it. As to the cantata, which begins with *Giusti Dei Cesara*, it has no other meaning, than the words naturally imply, on first reading: which say; that the praises of our August Princes are too great a subject for me; that having been too daring in attempting it, heaven has punished my presumption, by rendering my lyre disobedient to my will, and that I see my error and sue for pardon. I should be glad to know what these words could possibly mean, if not this. But what a difficult task it is to compose verses many times every year on a Prince, who, though she merits such high praise, will not hear it?

I shall receive, with the utmost pleasure, at your convenience, the two tragedies which you say you have written; and have no doubt of their merit, from the long commerce which you have constantly had with the muses and their favourites.

I beg

I beg my respects to your surfeited priests, to whom I send my wishes in blank, since my former were so unsuccessful. Your most worthy count Canale thanks and salutes you; and, embracing you tenderly, I am as usual.

Vienna, Feb. 18, 1747.

## L E T T E R V.

### TO THE SAME.

I CONGRATULATE you, in the first place, on the magnificent and courageous sentiments, with which your most agreeable letter of the 18th of March is filled. I admire your sovereign contempt of the enemy; your paternal confidence in our allies enchants me; your high respect for our forces and counsils gives me consolation; and, in short, I envy and admire that firm and intrepid tranquillity of mind, which I did not think subsisted on earth; but which I find resides thus undisturbed in the serene breast of my dear Filippini. May God increase and fortify these gifts, and grant some little portion of their influence to my feeble and diminutive soul,

soul, which, remembering the past, and dissatisfied with the present, is unable to imagine any thing good for the future. To our Marquis Ormea, bold and animated thoughts of right belong ; they are the patrimony of his military profession, which he exercises with so much honour ; but to me, born and bred, in a manner under the petticoats of the poor pusillanimous muses, who are indeed no better than little weak women, doubts are more natural ; and some, who only examine the outside of things, call this prudence, while others term it timidity.

The Marquis of Ormea and Count Brown, as well as yourself, do the author of the little fable of the *Ballerina* too much honour, by your contempt. How is it possible to escape the foolish loquacity of impertinent people ? Perhaps some *equivoque* has given birth to this nonsense, without any evil intention ; and to the usual credulity and rage for exaggeration and the wonderful, all the attention which the public has bestowed upon it may be imputed. But whatever opinion the world may have of it, pray let it circulate in peace and quiet ; for when we arrive at a certain age, the wild stories of our youthful vigour do not displease us, though apocryphal.

I have

( 187 )

I have just received letters from Rome and Naples, with interrogations concerning the romance of *La Ballerina*. And I begin myself to be curious to know whence this fable, without head or tail, or even the least foundation, could possibly have its origin.

Vienna, April 22, 1747.

## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

As it is impossible to reconcile your courage with my cowardice, concerning political presages, I shall follow the advice given in your last, and freight my letters with other merchandize. Not, however, without some inward malignity of self-complacence, for having communicated to you a little of my own vice of despondency, instead of contracting, myself, some tincture of your fortitude. At least (but I do not expect you to confess it) your being the first to relinquish your opinion, does not flatter my vanity a little. But let us not triumph in matters concerning which we should be glad to be

vanquished.—My *Attilio Regolo* sleeps; and I cannot prevail on myself, in the present languid state of my health, to set about making the small additions to the last scene, which are still wanting, without being forced to it. If my health is better next year, I shall think of it.

Vienna, June 14, 1747.

## L E T T E R VII.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

If your letter of the 4th instant had been delivered to me without date, without signature, and written in a strange hand, I should still instantly have recognized in it my dear Pasquini. That impetuosity, indignation, force of expression, and contempt, are unequivocal traits of character. And is it possible, after so many years of public concubinage with the muses, you should be surprised to find, that it is the fate of all works of genius, to be exposed to capricious censure, without examination? Do you not know, that every one is proud of his own sagacity, though obliged to confess that he has no science?

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Can you forget what has been said of Homer and Virgil? Are the Pamphili and Mævii of Horace out of your memory? Does not what happened in the Roman theatre, to Lælius and Scipio, console you? Does the abuse of Tasso, by the barbers of Florence, appear trifling to you? Have not you asserted to me a thousand times, notwithstanding all I could say to you, that on certain occasions you have exhausted all your impatient friendship, in transports of true Pasquinian passion in my defence? What new ideas then have entered your head? Would you be the only one of all the poetical family in whom there should be no cause for ridicule? That would be too proud. Do you wish never to be the subject of conversation? That would be too modest, and but ill understanding your own interest. The correspondence between authors and the public, is like that of lovers, among whom the most fatal symptom is not anger, but neglect. For my own part, after long experience, I have found no better method of treating critics, than *to profit by their remarks, if good, and laugh at them, if bad: and always aspiring at perfection, to let the rest rail till they are tired.*

I do

I do not mean to propose myself as a model, but the recipe has been successfully tried. Appear therefore these tumults, I entreat you : let the mind recover its true tone, and let us speak of the *Generosa Spartana*. I am proud of the gift, no less for its own merit, than as a testimony of your remembrance. I have already twice perused it with attention. And now, with your good leave, I shall give you my sincere opinion of it.

I find the verse round and flowing ; the style as ornate, and poetical, as belongs to dramatic composition ; and the places very few in which the bow seems somewhat relaxed, and where I should have wished for more strength. But for this we have a passage in Horace, *verum opere longo fas est abepere somnum*. There is a sufficient number of fine thoughts, and solid sentiments, without pedantry, no less acutely conceived, than luminously produced. The airs are all harmonious and happy. In short, repeating what I have told you a thousand times, I do not find many at, present, who, in this poetical faculty, please me more than yourself. But, after long use, you are certainly not ignorant how fastidious and difficult I am become ;

become ; hence it will not appear strange, if I preserve my character with a friend who wishes me to be sincere.

I therefore confess to you, freely, that I should have wished more design throughout your opera. Or, to explain myself more clearly, that the principles and passions you proposed to introduce, were better established. The audience cannot interest themselves, as you would wish, in the agitations of your personages, because there is not sufficient time allowed to render them either hateful or amiable. If the mind of a spectator is removed from its usual temperament and tranquillity, the interest does not continue long enough to be remembered in the next scene : so that it becomes torpid and unwilling to be pleased, even to that degree of nausea which soon comes on for those very beauties, which, otherwise, might successfully have solicited and seduced. And those who are not initiated in the mysteries of poetry, feeling themselves tired, without knowing the cause, frequently lay the blame on what is worthy of praise ; exactly as a sick child unable to point out the suffering part whence its pain had its beginning, either mistakes one place for another, or complains of all alike.

This

This is my opinion, yet not given as a law—but who will dare decide positively in these matters?

Desire the critics themselves to name you a perfect Archetype. I know not how to suggest any one to you, except that of my friendship, of which I have given you no slight specimen, in the dangerous sincerity with which I have now ventured to write you my sentiments.

Receive it kindly; return it: love me, and believe that I am, &c.

Vienna, July 22, 1747.

This letter may serve as a specimen of the urbanity, yet frankness, with which he played the critic, in examining the works of his most intimate friends. This correspondence with Pasquini, the Dresden Laureate, will be resumed, occasionally, in chronological order.

END OF THE FIFTH SECTION.

SECTION

## S E C T I O N VI.

WE are now arrived at a very interesting period in the correspondence of Metastasio, to the lovers of poetry and music, when a constant literary intercourse with the celebrated FARINELLI began, which continued to the end of both their lives. Farinelli's wonderful professional abilities have been so amply celebrated lately, that nothing need be said in addition to former accounts (o). But the permanence of friendship between him and Metastasio, which continued fifty years after they were separated, and established in the service of different Monarchs, in the two most remote capitals of Europe, deserves some record.

It has already been mentioned in these Memoirs, that the poet and musician were nearly of the same age, and began their public career in the city of Naples, at the

(o) *Ital. Tour, and Hist. Mus.* vol. iv.

fame period of time: Farinelli having performed there in the Serenata of *Angelica*, written by Metastasio in 1723, and in his opera of *Didone*, in 1724.

The success with which their several talents were crowned in these early efforts, and a happy coincidence of temper and disposition, which each found in the other, of those virtues and qualities which he most loved, admired, and practised, through life, cemented affection and riveted their hearts, beyond the power of time or accident to sever.

It will appear through the whole correspondence which has been preserved, that they regarded each other as *Twins* of public favour, brought to light at the same *birth*, and united in one common interest. Metastasio never envied the applause of the singer, nor imagined his poetry injured by his too florid style of singing, though the fame of Farinelli seems to have been built more upon the extraordinary compass of his voice, and powers of execution, than upon his fine acting or tender expression. And such was his fraternal affection and partiality for his *Caro Gemello*, that he afterwards appears so entirely to have overlooked or forgotten the want of simplicity, action, and pathos in his singing,

as severely to censure younger performers, for these defects, in his letters to Farinelli himself.

Musical readers need not be reminded, that Farinelli, after singing with unrivalled applause in the principal lyric theatres of Europe, came into England in the year 1733; and after performing there four successive seasons, and engaging for a fifth, was invited to Spain in 1737, when his voice having been found to have the same effect on the disorder of the Spanish Monarch, Philip V. as the harp of David upon the evil spirit of King Saul, he was retained in the service of that court, and a pension settled on him for life, of £. 3000 sterling a year, upon condition that he never sung again on a public stage. And in order to elevate him to a rank worthy of attending a sovereign in his private hours, he was honoured with the orders of St. Jago and Calatrava. In 1746 his royal patron Philip V. died; but his court favour continued under that monarch's successor with equal splendor. The first letter to Farinelli which has been inserted in the literary correspondence of Metastasio, is in answer to one from that celebrated singer, of July 2d,

1747, about a year after the new monarch of Spain had ascended the throne.

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## LETTER I.

TO THE CAVALIERE CARLO BROSCHI DETTO  
PARINELLI.

Your most agreeable, but short, letter, concerning my infatiable thirst for talking with you in the best manner which such an enormous distance will admit, was long enough to convince me of the place I hold in your heart: for without that circumstance, you certainly would not have sacrificed even so much time and labour. The convenience, civility, politeness, and the other common ties of society, are not used to inspire such patience. This proof therefore of tender friendship, added to ancient testimonies and new protestations, render me so secure of it, that I should have doubted of any thing sooner than of your affection. This alone would have been sufficient to make me love you, in return; you know by long experience, *cbe amore a nullo amar perdonata* (p). Now your

(p) That love allows nothing beloved to love another.  
merit,

merit, which has rendered you as amiable as singular, is an accumulation of powerful effects.

The confidence with which you speak to me of your affairs; the cordiality of your offer to redress mine; the tender anxiety which you manifest for my health; the instruction and expedients which you suggest; the descriptions of my misfortunes, and the protection which you procure me from those illustrious nymphs \* :—in short, your generous idea is so much to my palate, as greatly encourages hope: unite then all these circumstances, and tell me who is the arithmetician that is able to enumerate the product. I can express myself no better than by telling you, that I love you as Farinelli deserves to be loved.

It is impossible for the description which you have sent me of your malady, and being let blood, as well as of the French surgeon, and Lombardo the physician, to be more lively, and full of wit. I have often laughed at the humour with which you have seasoned a narration, tragic in itself: Would to heaven the ardent wishes of all persons of taste

\* Ladies at the court of Madrid, whose influence was promised in favour of Metastasio's Sicilian claims; but whose names have been concealed.

and delicacy in Europe were gratified; and that all your hypochondriac complaints were entirely subdued! shew me a good example, as you have already a bad one, and I will try to follow it.

Your music to my *Nice* is worthy of you. Its merit begins by the touching tones of the flute, and encreases to the noble simplicity which belongs to such compositions. I readily give way to you, or rather am proud of being vanquished by you: and who would be ashamed of being surpassed in music by my incomparable Farinelli? I have been no less enchanted with the setting of the little dedication: *se mi dai*\*. But in this last you have a little forgotten that nature is not lavish of Farinelli's, and that the execution of this music, in order to have all its effect, requires the excellence of its composer. Though I am no musician, further than is necessary to a Poet, I comprehend your intention, and try hard to second it. But *spiritus promptus est, caro autem infirma*. Let us understand one another: I speak of my voice; let no

\* To what this alludes does not appear, it is not the initial verse of any song in Metastasio's works that I have been able to find.

equivoque enter your head injurious to my faith.

Oh my dear Farinelli, what agitation, tumult, and storms have you awakened in my mind, by confiding to me the great, though unmerited fortune of my *Nice!* You, who know the vanity of poets, conceal no circumstance from me which can exalt it to its highest elevation. In short, I perceive very plainly the malignant pleasure you take in turning my head, and seeing how I am agitated between pride and confusion; self complacence and envy. Oh happy *Nice!* who could have imagined that I should ever have envied thy fate? with what veneration ought I not to regard thee in future.

You believe me in great danger here from the charms of some tranquil Teutonic Beauty. Oh how mistaken you are! Here love and hatred never disturb the sleep of any mortal: here the body cares very little for the affairs of the mind: at night you may be a favourite, and in the morning unknown. Eagerness, agitation, solicitude, little quarrels, reconciliations, gratitude, vengeance, the language of the eyes, the eloquence of silence, in short whatever can give pleasure or pain in the delicate commerce of souls,

is *terra incognita*, or thought ridiculous and fit only for the embellishment of romances. It is incredible to what a pitch of indolence the placid nymphs of this place are arrived. I should despair of finding one that would relinquish a game at *Piquet* for the loss or death of her dearest lover. There are many who would think the turning aside from their sampler among the most mysterious excesses of genius. And you fear for my tranquillity? Make yourself easy. I run no risk. Assure the most benign lady, who, without my having deserved her compassion, generously interests herself in my supposed danger, that I am safe. Express to her likewise my most humble and grateful sentiments for the patronage with which she honours my writings. Tell her that the noble picture which you have been pleased to draw of her, has rendered me more sensible to the cold of the north, where no such plants ever blossom. You, in short, were born when the moon was increasing, all thrives to your wish. It is necessary to be a Farinelli, a friend, and a twin brother, not to be envied by me.

From this frankness, which I should not have used to any but yourself, it is easy for you to imagine whether I could possibly have  
regarded

regarded you as my voluntary rival, in the office of treasurer of Cosenza. The notice which your brother had obtained of it, was neither from me, nor exact in itself: and if it had, I should never have attributed the fault to my dear Farinelli, who loves me too well, and who thinks too nobly. I have mentioned it, because we are eager to speak of what gives us pain. And how can I refrain from vexation, my dear friend, to see myself stript in this manner, without any crime, of all the fruits of my poor labours; of all my hopes, and of all support for my old age! Do you wish to know the extent of my misfortunes? Hear, and pity me.

Charles VI. as a reward for my long services, and *to supply my unpaid salary*, granted me a thousand crowns in Sicily, on a bishoprick or benefice in that kingdom. But all the Bishops, Abbots, and beneficial Clergy, became, from that time, immortal: and the kingdom was lost before I had received a penny. The treasurership of Cosenza in *Calabria* becoming vacant, and my august patron remembering my arrears, destined it for me: I took possession, spent more than 800 ducats of *my own money*, in fees and other expences; but before I had

had begun to reap the first crop, the armed Spaniards entered the kingdom, and I remained with my patent in my hand, ready for curling my hair, or folding up sugar-plumbs. My present most clement sovereign (*q*), is obliged, by the circumstances of the times, to diminish the salaries of her servants; but in order to compensate this diminution, as well as to console me for my former losses, she has assigned me 1500 florins, and not a Canonicate, in Milan. Five years have elapsed since this favour was promised, but a thousand impediments have intervened, which I have not understood, even while I have *experienced* their effects. Now what do you think of all this? Is not mine an afflicting case? Yet I exaggerate nothing. After fifteen years service, not indeed from the fault of my patrons, but of my enemy Fortune, I am in a worse state, than when I left my country.

From this faithful narrative, you may easily imagine what confidence I place in you: a confidence which I owe in return for yours. How can I ever sufficiently thank you for the affectionate and zealous manner with which you have offered

(*q*) The Empress Queen, impoverished by a seven years' War.

to put me in a way to bring this unfortunate business to a *happy determination?* I recognise in these uncommon testimonies of friendship, the heart of my Farinelli: and I am proud of my sagacity for having said a thousand times, that in you, all was harmony, all of the same degree of excellence. I am already as much your debtor, from the eagerness which you have manifested to serve me, as if you had been successful: because the reasons for being obliged, depend more upon the exertions than the event. To furnish you with some authentic documents, I enclose a *solemn certificate from the secretary of the supreme counsel for Italy;* also the *concession of the treasurership:* as well as the *dispatches by which the appointment was then notified at Naples.* My possession in Naples will be proved the instant you require it. I will appoint a person in the beautiful Parthenope (*r*) who shall assist, when and where you please, in this enquiry. "Oh if you could but relate this melancholy tale to your august sovereign! For full of clemency, generosity, and justice, as the world pronounces and you describe her, it is im-

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(r) Naples.

possible

possible but that her soul must incline to grant me some redress. Indeed I should now regard the favour as wholly new, from the hands of so great a benefactress. Her bounty, though bestowed on a person who may want merit, would yet fall on one that is known to you, and therefore the beneficent act of a royal patroness would certainly not remain a secret; but be held out as an example to her equals, and a consolation to the oppressed. And if the voice of a poor Grass-hopper of Parnassus, like myself, could possibly reach the ears of posterity; they, and their children's children, should know the pious and powerful hand which deigned to sustain and protect me, in despight of the utmost efforts of cruel and capricious Fortune (s)."

And are not the innumerable testimonies which my dear *Gemello* has given me of his love sufficient, but they must be ratified by gifts! *Vanilla, chocolate, bark, extract of am-*

(s) Princes are, in general, ignorant of an essential rule in commerce, which enjoins its votaries to *buy cheap, and sell dear*. If her Catholic Majesty had wished to make a *good bargain* in the purchase of fame, she might have had a great penny-worth, in serving a *Poet* gifted with so good and grateful a heart, as *Metastasio*; who, for inconsiderable temporary advantage, would have rendered his royal benefactress immortal.

*erantb, jars of snuff.*—But this is overpowering me in such a manner, as to deprive me of all hope of ever making any return. All I can do, at present, is to begin to be grateful, by confessing the debt, and wishing for powers to pay it.

The Court is at an imperial castle in Hungary, where, consequently, is Madame Fouchs; so that I am not likely to see her soon, as I am already booted to go to Moravia, where I shall remain till October, with our most worthy Countess of Althan, partly by the advice of the Physicians, and partly for the enjoyment of her noble seat. So that your commission to Madame Fouchs cannot be executed till my return. I had already delivered your message to the Countess of Althan, in the *Favorita* Gardens, and in the midst of a numerous assembly: shewing, with great ostentation, your *very short* letter. I am unable to tell you how pleased this lady was with your courteous remembrance, how curious to know the particular phrase with which you had ordered me to express it, and with what eagerness she wished to be minutely and repeatedly informed of your health and present situation, interesting herself in the one, and exulting in

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the other. I had then the whole company upon me, to whom I was obliged to sing over and over again the same *Canzone*, as well as those airs which you had constantly sung during so many years in the royal apartments (*t*). It would have delighted you, as it did me, to a very great degree, to see how fresh you were still in memory, after so long an absence, in a climate governed by oblivion. (*u*)

And are you then determined to have my picture? Oh how vexatious! The patience necessary to serve as a model to the indiscretion of a painter, is to me the most difficult of all virtues to attain. Hitherto there are no other pictures of me than those spurious satyrs which the printers have placed at the head of my works; and they move my bile every time I chance to see them. But who can resist the solicitations of a beloved twin brother? At my return from the country, I shall undertake this business, as a penitence for my sins, and try to indulge your longing in such a manner as may prevent a

(*t*) These were *Pallido il sole*; *Per questo dolce amplezzo*; & *Ab non lasciarmi, no*, all set by Hafse.

(*u*) Farinelli had been three times at Vienna, before he went to Spain, in 1737. His first engagement at the Imperial court was, in 1727.

miscarriage.

miscarriage. But you must not be surprised if you see an hypochondriac countenance on the canvas, because I shall find it very difficult to smile in the painter's face, unless I can persuade some Faun or Dryad to assist at the operation, and help to sweeten the bitter task.

With all the diligence I could use, even to the confines of impertinence, I have not been able to procure the authentic certificate, and that other paper mentioned above, time enough to accompany this letter. I shall therefore leave orders, before my departure for the country, for them to be sent by the same conveyance.

I have had two little Cantatas transcribed, which I wrote sometime since for this court, but which are not yet very common. I shall inclose these, but not for you. I mean them as a tribute to that illustrious protectress of the Italian Muses, the Countess of Bellalcazar. If, however, you would illustrate them with your notes and majestic voice, I should be certain that the tribute would be highly approved, by a lady of such delicate taste.

I finish because I am on the point of setting off, and the exact moment of my departure does not depend on myself. Love me

as much as I do you, and you will gratify the infinite avidity which I feel for your affection, and do justice to the tender solicitude with which I am, and ever shall be, &c.

Vienna, August 26th. 1747.

## L E T T E R II.

### TO THE SAME.

YOUR dear letter of Oct. 29th, as usual, was replete with the balm of that affection, of which I am so extremely solicitous and vain. The grotesque description of the magnificent habitation whence you wrote, has frequently made me laugh, and long to embrace my pleasant Nennillo (x).

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I have laughed quite as much, though in my sleeve, at your lively picture of Armida. Oh poor Nennillo!

You will soon have *Armida placata*. I hope you will find in it much to approve,

(x) The rest of the period is in the Neapolitan *Patois*, which I am unable to decipher. All I can discover is, that the corpulency, as well as absurdity, of the first female singer (perhaps the *Tesi*) had been the subject of Farinelli's pleasantries.

particularly

particularly in the part of the first woman, and first man, for whom I have taken the most pains. And you would have found in it much less to blame, if that great booby, Migliavacca, after I had corrected with great labour, the whole opera, had not taken the liberty in transcribing it, to alter, add, and retrench at his pleasure. This put me into a violent rage, when he told it me at my return from the country. His excuse was, the impossibility of communicating to me his doubts soon enough for the time which you had prescribed for finishing it. With all this, the subject is gay, and cannot have been so injured, as not to leave room to hope for its meeting with success.

From what has happened, you may judge, that our Migliavacca is capable of writing a good song, cantata, sonnet, and such things as, in short, require no great art in the conduct and management of the passions, or support of characters. But for theatrical action and effect, I have found his judgment less matured than his age, which is about thirty, promised; or his other little and pleasing compositions, made me expect. I tell you this, that you may know precisely what to hope, if you should think of employing him.

I wished to render service to all, and to recommend engaging the Tesi; but now it is brought to a crisis, I cannot deceive you. Find out her abilities, and then do her good, if you can. It is certain that experience, of which, at present, she is in want, might render her much better; but you wish me to speak of the present, and not prophesy concerning the future. It is not necessary to communicate my sincerity to Madame, who would perhaps not be pleased with it. Let it be a hint to you, but not attended with ill will to me. It will therefore be more prudent to send your letters by the Venetian Ambassador's bag, in which I inclose my own. And when you desire to remit to Migliavacca some compensation for his trouble, I beg of you to do it by means of the Tesi, who interests herself in his affairs. I did nothing more than try that you should be as well served as possible; and this I have done, and ever shall do, for my valued Gemello.

My picture for you, set off from Vienna with Prince Trivulsi, the beginning of October. This Prince entreated to have the care of it, and carried it with him to Venice, that it might afterwards travel with  
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more security. I know not how it is to go on, but we may depend on his diligence, and true eagerness to favour me, and to please you. Who knows whether, by the time this letter arrives, I shall not be already in your hands, and perhaps present at the rehearsal of the charming Armida, where the original would esteem himself most happy to be also.

I should wrong the good heart of my dear Gemello by reiterating my entreaties about the *Percettorial* business; I feel with what affection you wish to forward it, and know that your soul is incapable of assuming the shameful character of a dealer in that kind of smoke which abounds in courts. I reflect on what I would do for you, if I were able; and have not the least doubt of your doing every thing for me, which circumstances will admit. The excuse of *example*, which has been urged from Naples, is easily refuted; there are three very just ways of preventing my case from ever becoming a precedent to any other. In the first place, the dispatches might say, that *the receivership was restored to me for the same reason as offices are restored to others, who possessed them by a weighty title*; that is, by *having purchased them*. And this

will be no lie: the *Percettoria* was not obtained by me as a free gift, but in recompence for a *promised salary which had not been payed*. And if the reward agreed upon for labours of the brain are not paid in money, what must be the capital of we poor crickets of Parnassus? Should this expedient be disapproved, here is another which equally precludes precedent: the place of *Percettoria* may be restored to me, *not as the restoration of an ancient possession, but as a new favour which has not the least relation to the old grant*. Where would be the extravagance of a generous Prince, protector of the fine arts, spontaneously exercising his munificence on a man who, by chance, if not merit, is esteemed in Europe not the meanest of his profession? If this second road should be thought impassable, though it appears to me the most worthy of the royal grandeur of such a sovereign, here is, lastly, a third: which is, *the causing it to be bought as a new purchase*, which will equally preclude all precedent of restitution. Do not forget, my dear friend, to suggest these expedients, that the fear of precedent may not check the generous propensity of the sovereign. I should not have wearied you so long on this subject, had

had it not seemed absolutely necessary to furnish you with arms to combat in my favour. I thank you for the recipe, which I shall have made up exactly, and try its efficacy with the greater hope of success, as every thing is more dear that comes from my beloved Gemello, than from any other quarter.

Your idea of providing for the expence of my journey, is extremely grateful to me, as a proof of your affection; but think how great would be the difficulties of other kinds; and how little occasion there is for this proof, to convince me that our friendship is reciprocal.

Our worthy Countess of Althan has received news of you, and of being remembered by you, with her usual kindness and pleasure. With respect to music, whatever she hears, Farinelli continues to be her hero: and as a proof of this, she has freighted a bark with salutations for you, which I shall dispatch, on condition that you, in return, will present my constant respects to the Duchess of Bejar, whose picture in your letter has haunted me ever since I saw it. Addio, dear Gemello, be careful of your

health, and sometimes think of your Metastasio.

Vienna, Dec. 7, 1747.

As no letters to Farinelli have been preserved, that were written in 1748, we shall return to his correspondents, Filipponi, and Pasquini, to whom he seems to have written with great openness of heart.

### L E T T E R III.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

YOUR most welcome letter of the 2d instant, found me in the pleasant country of Moravia, where I have been many months, far from the noise of the city, in pursuit of that health, which always seems near, yet when I try to catch it, the phantom gives me the slip. I wander through two vast domains belonging to the incomparable Countess Althan, where the generosity of the magnificent lady of the mansion, the noble variety of the company, the abundance of whatever can contribute to delight, as well as comfort, the princely apartments,

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the situation, air, walks, conversation, and, in short, the whole tenor of a life sufficiently rustic for the enjoyment of all the beauties of nature, without being deprived of the conveniences of art; and above all, the advantages which I feel in this tranquil retirement, from the care that is taken of my disordered machine; these make me forget the complaints I brought with me, which, either from the cheerfulness the mind acquires here, or the circumstances just mentioned, appear, or are, in reality, nearly subdued. This is the news which you desired.

Soflowitz, Sept. 29, 1747.

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## L E T T E R IV.

TO THE SAME.

GENERAL Stampa quitted this place, on his return to Milan, the end of last week. Consigned to his care, and directed to you, are the MSS. for our Padre Paoli, which Count Canale had so repeatedly promised him. And now I am liberated from a commission which has long lain heavy on my conscience.

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They would have been sent much sooner, if any safe conveyance could have been found; but MSS. of which there are no duplicates, are of such consequence, that it seemed necessary to measure my scruples by the tender regard which an author has for his own productions; so that I hope to be thanked for the delay.

Must I send you the usual compliments of the season? It is the exact period for this ceremony; as, by the time this letter arrives, it will be in general performance throughout Christendom. But let us not contaminate our friendship by such vulgar, worn-out, and insipid forms, which now are become a burthen to society, and a disgrace for real friends to use; they neither excite benevolence, nor prevent the coldness of neglect. I know that you have no doubt of my affection and good wishes, and that I am sure of yours: so that without new protestations, the whole year is Christmas with us, reciprocally.

My annual retreat into the country for near two months, had turned out so profitable, that I flattered myself with the hopes of having wholly subdued my nervous complaints, and all the other barbarous enemies united

united to annoy me ; but the first cold precursors of winter have again driven me near the enemy, from whom, however, I courageously defend myself, hoping at length to tire them out. And indeed their assaults are less frequent and less furious than formerly : if I can still diminish their forces a little, I shall, in this particular, be content with my fate : never expecting a profound peace, but a less unequal war.

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## LETTER V.

## TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I HAVE attentively read your new pastoral fable, and without entering upon a minute examination of it, I assure you, with that candour to which we are mutually accustomed, that it has pleased me much more than the *Generous Spartan*, in all its parts, except the style ; as in that, to own the truth, you appear to me sometimes too negligent. You will say, and with great truth, that the interlocutors should speak a language suitable to their station. But I believe, that between the language of real and theatrical shepherds,

shepherds, there should be the same proportion of difference, as the best writers usually observe between real and theatrical prises. Human nature is vain, and never pleased with those portraits which lower the advantageous opinions which it forms of itself; like those beauties, who are unwilling to sit, unless to such dextrous painters as can draw their likeness, more from the good than bad features of their faces; diminishing in some with modest adulation wherever there is excess, and adding to others, with the same caution, whatever is wanting to perfection. Guarini was too sensible of this weakness, and meant to flatter it in his celebrated *Pastor fido*, by the happy pretext of his personages being of divine origin, attributing to shepherds the language of philosophers and heroes: and by artfully mixing whatever was most pleasing in the country, most grand in courts, and most ingenious in the schools, has formed such a magic composition, as, in spite of the many poetical canons which he dared to violate, has extorted admiration, not only from his own countrymen, but the most polished people in every other part of Europe. Indeed he has often had the address to soften the rigour even of  
inexorable

inexorable critics themselves, who only read his work in order to condemn it.

But such seem to me the laws to which it is necessary to submit, in order to please by imitating nature. How much it may be necessary to change the materials, in order to excite wonder and delight ; and what is the difference between imitating nature, and nature herself, are not subjects to be discussed in a short letter. Perhaps, some time or other, I may explain myself more fully, if it should please providence to grant me a few quiet days among those that are yet in store (*y*).

And now I congratulate myself as well as you, on your last production, not only in compliment to my own judgment, but for that which experience has here pronounced concerning your abilities ; indeed I plainly perceive that more curiosity is excited in your readers by this composition, than by any other of your dramatic writings.

I am much obliged to your Messrs. Walther for the favourable opinion they enter-

(*y*) He here, doubtless, alludes to his notes on an extract from Aristotle's Poetics, which were not published till after his decease. See Zatta's Edit. Venice, 1783. Tom. xvi. And that of Nice, 1786.

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tain of my works ; but it is not for me to pronounce upon the expediency of the enterprise ; it is their busines to examine how the expence of a new impression of my writings will be repaid by the public. There are already *nine* editions at Venice ; there are others at Rome, Milan, Naples, and Lucca ; and perhaps still more of which I am ignorant. Hence, if this edition is not superior in paper, type, correctness, and ornaments, it will be confounded in the croud of others, which are either very bad, or not above mediocrity.

I have not yet seen the Dresden Boileau ; pray send it by the first safe and speedy conveyance ; do the same by Voltaire.—But what can I say to seconde your eagernes about this new impression ? I have but few inedited pieces in my posseſſion, and of these few, ſome I cannot, and others I ought not, to make public. However, I have not the heart to refuse granting any request of yours. I ſhall therefore collect, on your account, a ſmall number of cantatas of my writing, which are limping about in a miſerable ſtate, that has not been bettered by the hands of the lovers of poetry who have given them house room ; but these will not

amount to above twelve or fourteen. Besides this, I shall take a copy of some editions of Venice, and sheet by sheet, correct the errors with which they abound, that they may serve as originals for the new edition. But stay!—This is not all. There is an opera intituled *SIFACE*, which I wrote many years ago, against my will. I must explain myself. Obliged to accommodate a very old and imperfect drama, I began by new versifying, and arranging its scenes; but by changing and changing, there did not remain a single verse of the original, and very little in the disposition of the scenes. I never would consent to legitimate this offspring, and yet it has always passed in Italy for mine. If I can find a copy not much disfigured, I shall correct this drama, and with a short historical information to the public, add it to the new edition. In consideration of the pains I shall take, I must impose on you, some conditions. The first is, that you will undertake to correct the press yourself, and in a short advertisement inform the public of the enormous defects of former editions, and of the advantages of the new, without entering at all into the usual panegyrics on the author, for this

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plain reason, that you are too friendly and partial a judge for such an undertaking. In the second place, Messrs. Walther must convince me of the elegance of their typography, by sending me a proof-sheet, as a specimen, and solemnly agree to an exact performance of their promise to the public.

I rejoice that my *Demofonte* is in such masterly and friendly hands; make what use of it you please, as I am certain it will receive no injury(z). Oh how I envy your vicinity to that most worthy Count Archinto! I have long respected his merit. But during his residence at this court, he infinitely increased my reverence. Return him, I entreat you, my most humble thanks for the benignant remembrance of me which he has deigned to preserve; assuring him of my most grateful sentiments and wishes for his health, concerning which I daily fabricate in my mind a thousand smiling and happy ideas of the time to come.

(z) Hasse was at this time new setting the opera of *Demofonte* for the court of Dresden: many of the airs were afterwards performed in England by Mingotti, about the year 1755, when the admirable *Cantabile: Se tutti i mali miei*, was constantly encored during the run of the opera.

I have

I have dried up your brain sufficiently for to-day ; I will not deprive it of all moisture at once. It is well if any thing more remains for me to do. Take care of your health for your own sake and for that of your friends, among whom I claim a distinct place, as the esteem and friendship is distinct, of yours, &c.

Vienna, Jan. 27, 1748.

## L E T T E R VI.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

WHEN you have a favourable opportunity, I entreat you to salute, in my name, the worthy Count de Richecourt. Though I was not able to enjoy his company and conversation at Count Canale's so often as I wished, yet I saw enough of him to convince me how much he is indebted to nature and to himself, for his uncommon share of merit. I am infinitely obliged to him for allowing me a place in his remembrance, and shall be extremely indebted to you, if you will try, from time to time, to mingle me among the crowd of his other more grave,

useful, or pleasant ideas. I bear the excess of your esteem for me, as it arises from the excess of your friendship, of which I am so anxious, that it subdues my shame for owing it to a mistake. Continue to love me, but without examining the motives. I tremble lest, at a future time, you should meet with some pious soul or other who, in christian charity, should strive to undeceive you. As to the state of my health, I must confess, that my patience is not in perfect equilibrium. The journey is long, and philosophy lame. I neither know what influence the soul has over our machine, nor how it is communicated, being substances of such a different nature ; but I feel in a more lively manner than I wish, that my own poor little soul pays dearly for the decays of its mansion.

After you have confessed yourself to be jealous of me, I know not how to comport myself with your priestess. I must recommend myself to Plato, an excellent comforter of husbands. Pray present my compliments to her platonically. Do not injure me in her opinion, and allow me, with all due restrictions, to assure her of my being no less hers than yours.

Vienna, Feb. 3, 1748.

The

The two following letters would not have been inserted, had it not been imagined, that such readers as interest themselves in the dramatic works of Metastasio, would be curious to know his own ideas concerning their performance.—These letters, at least, may be of use, not only to the *directors* and *performers* of the individual drama of *Demofoonte*, but of operas in general.

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## LETTER VII.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

Oh great Pasquini! Great Pasquini! Shew me my plan however, that I may not censure you for my own blunders. If you ask me how I intended the situations of my *Demofoonte* to be disposed in the theatre, and how I should have arranged them if I had directed the whole myself, it was proper that I should write to you what you mention. If you ask me who should be placed on the right hand, and who on the left, I must tell you I never meant to regulate that by the dignity of the personages, but by the convenience and necessity of the action. And if,

in favour of such convenience and necessity, the superior personages chance to be on the left of the inferior, they may be respected and distinguished in various ways; for example: by being a little forwarder on the stage than the rest, or being situated in the middle of the stage and facing the audience, while the subaltern characters are further on the stage, with their sides to the audience and faces towards the principal personages. And indeed by a thousand other expedients they may be distinguished, without having the right side of the stage assigned to them. If further, in pursuing this subject, you should ask what characters have a right to exact respect, whether *Dircea* from *Creusa*, or *Creusa* from *Dircea*, I should tell you *Dircea*, as an undiscovered Princess, owes to *Creusa* all those manifestations of respect which are due from private individuals to persons of royal condition. But for heaven's sake explain to me, if you can, why you think respect is shewn to the principal personages by their always occupying the right side of the stage? I could give more reasons against it than those already mentioned, if I had time to write them. I have explained myself on this subject to Baron Diescau, and to Signor Hassle,

Hafse, though more concisely, as he is a professional man. You are right, however, in supposing that *Dircea* should take place, upon the stage, of *Creusa*. Yet, in my opinion, wholly wrong in imagining that the right side is always the post of honour.

But before the arrival of this letter, I hope you will be convinced by what I have written to Baron Diescau.

Vienna, Feb. 16th. 1748.

## L E T T E R VIII.

### TO BARON DIESCAU, AT DRESDEN.

It is a great mistake, in my opinion, to imagine that the right or left side of the stage determines the pre-eminence of theatrical characters. These places ought to be occupied according to the necessity of the actors. It is necessary, for example, that the actor should be near the person to whom he would speak, or whom he would detain, assault, defend, or transact any kind of business with, that would be difficult or ridiculous to perform in any other situation. Wherever a great personage happens to be, will become the principal place; he may, however, indi-

cate his superiority by being a little forwarder on the stage than his inferiors, which will be a less equivocal distinction than the right hand, which has varied and changes its signification, according to the caprice of different ages and nations. Upon these principles, in spite of the old practise of our theatres, I have always regulated the performance of my dramas, especially *Demofoonte*; which may be seen in a regular plan laid down and transmitted to the abate Pasquini, at his request, but a few days ago.

I hope, Sir, that the readiness of my perious obedience, will at least secure me the honour of your patronage, for which I most humbly supplicate (*a*).

Vienna, Feb. 21, 1748.

## L E T T E R IX.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI, AT TURIN.

To day, in contention with this letter, the Marquis della Rosea set off for Turin; we shall see who will arrive first. I would not confide it to him, that you might have two

(*a*) Baron Diescau was long superintendant of the lyric theatre of the electoral king of Poland, Augustus III.

mementos of me, instead of one. He will tell how much I love and esteem you; and do you assure him, of the indelible traces of veneration and affection which he has left impressed in my mind, and try to preserve him in that benevolent and partial disposition towards me, which he manifested at his departure.

I wished very much to second your hint concerning the subject of a sonnet, but my muses at present are troubled with hysterical affections; however, we will think of it when they become more tractable,

Vienna, April 28th. 1748.

## L E T T E R X.

### TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I have here the specimens which M. Walther the printer has communicated; and should do well to say no more. But if you wish to fatten him, you may say, *that I am extremely occupied, and cannot possibly dispose of myself; nor indeed dare I hope for leisure sufficient to second the generous partiality of Signor Walther, to whom I beg you to make due acknowledgements on my behalf.*

Know, that *Semiramide* is exalted to the stars, thanks to the excellence of the performers, and the magnificence of the decorations, in spite of an *arcbvandalian* music, which is insupportable. The *Tesi* has acted in a manner that has surprised me and every human creature in Vienna. *Venturini* and *Amorevoli* have pleased extremely. *Monticelli* has been much admired. *Lenzi* and the *Favaglini* have done wonders. In short, it is one of the most magnificent spectacles which can be presented by a sovereign. The most rigid matrons, the most ancient and virtuous ministers, and prelates, compose the most numerous and partial part of the audience.

June 29th. 1748.

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This opera, the first which had been performed at the imperial court, since the death of the emperor Charles VI. was represented in celebration of the peace, concluded at Aix la Chapelle. Monticelli and Amorevoli, who were in England from 1741, to 1746, after going thence to Venice, went from that city to Vienna, in order to perform on this occasion. The opera of *Semiramide*, which had been originally set by Vinci for Rome, in 1729, and afterwards by Porpora for Venice,

1735,

1735, was now new set by the celebrated *Bononcini*, who at near ninety years of age, was invited from Paris on the occasion.

No poem seems to have been produced by our author this year, except a very short *compliment*, by order of the empress queen, on the birth-day of the emperor Francis the first, which was pronounced with music, at seven years old, by the arch-duke Joseph, afterwards emperor. It was set by Reutter, at that time the imperial Maestro di capella.

#### C O M P L I M E N T O .

*Di quanto a sì gran giorno  
Son debitore, Augusto Padre, intendo :  
Ma non so dirla. Ab voglia il Ciel che in breve  
Lo diean l'opre : e che ritrovi il mondo  
In quel che far desio  
Il suo ben, la tua gloria, e il dover mio.  
Su la mia fronte intanto  
Fissa il paterno eiglio :  
E leggi il eor d'un figlio,  
Che non fisa spiegar.*

*Ma, ehe per or ha il vanto  
Di rispettarti al meno :  
Ma, che comprende a pieno  
Quanto ti deve amar.*

The sentiments of this little poem bear all the marks of delicacy and propriety, which

so eminently characterize the encomiastic productions of our aulic bard. They breathe no adulation that could shame the parent, or degrade the son.

How much I owe to this great day,  
Oh Parent most august, I understand,  
Though utt'rance to my thoughts I cannot give.  
May heav'n ere long, let actions for me speak,  
And all mankind discover how I wish  
Their good, the glory of my fire, and well  
To practise ev'ry duty of my state.

Till when, let fond paternal eyes  
With fix'd regard my face behold,  
And read my heart, which vainly tries  
Its tender feelings to unfold.

Happy, this day, respect to shew  
To him whose looks such love inspire;  
Till time more ample means bestow  
Of rev'rence to so great a fire.

## LETTER XI.

## TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

While I was preparing to answer your letter of the 13th inst. a parcel arrives from the secretary of legation at this court, with another letter from you, dated the 17th, and with it two pleasing cantatas: *Lavinia & Didone*; a very

a very ingenious and beautiful answer to my Palinodia to Nice; and two serenatas. I am glad that an *equivoque* has produced me the pleasure of your two compositions, with which you know I cannot but be pleased. At the same time, however, I must confess that I feel mortified. Vanity is the natural defect of us poor poets. And mine became excessive, in reflecting that a person of such high rank (*b*), able to write verses in such a manner as to make us all ashamed, had not disdained to number me in the croud of her just admirers. But it does not become me to enquire into this mystery. I venerate her, clip the wings of my vain glory, and hasten to speak my sentiments. You have known me long, and know that the court in which I was born, and this in which I have resided twenty years, have not taught me the language of adulation. So that what I write, are not unmeaning words of course.

Know then, that without your solemn protestations, and coincident assertions of

(*b*) The daughter of the Emperor Charles VII. afterwards Electrice of Saxony, who, at the decease of her consort, quitting politics, attached herself to music and poetry; wrote operas in Italian, set them to music, and performed in them herself, in person. See *Germ. Tour*, and *Hist. of Music*, vol. iv. p. 560.

other

other people to whom I cannot refuse giving credit, I should never have been able to imagine that a young princess should be able to write, and in a foreign language, such excellent poetry. In the two cantatas, not only the delicate arrangement of the thoughts, the connexion of ideas, the selection of words, the harmony of the verse, and the tenderness of expression, are admirable; but what surprises me still more, is a certain artful facility, which mere natural talents never furnish; for here a firmness of pulse appears, which is only to be acquired by long and laborious application. Now how is it possible to imagine, that such painful means should ever have been put in practice, by a person, who, from the eminence of her station, can have so few moments to herself?

I am impatient to receive the other compositions which you promise me; and henceforth you may be certain of having an importunate solicitor on your back; for I shall never let you rest in peace till I obtain from your friendship every thing of this kind that you can lay your hands on, unless prevented by an absolute prohibition.

I congratulate you on your two serenatas, but on the *Orfeo* more than the *Plotina*. In  
the

the first, the subject being more poetical, has more inflamed your imagination than the other.

Vienna, Jan. 25, 1749.

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## L E T T E R XII.

TO THE SAME.

WILL my dear Abate never become an œconomist? With the precious merchandize with which you all at once oppressed me in your letter of the 3d instant, you might have been able to feed my poetical vanity for whole years, however insatiable it may be. That a princess placed by providence so much above the generality of mortals, should deign to suffer the productions of her admirable talents to be seen by me; that with a sovereign and precious command she should put it out of all doubt, from what sublime source my enviable fortune came; and that such a glorious motive for me should be assigned for such condescension; are all super-abundant temptations, sufficient to render cynic indifference ambitious, and to disturb stoic insensibility. But that she should push

her

her generosity so far as to assign to me her own happy gifts, is a circumstance which justifies what I have formerly written:

*Che una specie di tormento  
È l'eccesso del piacer (c),*

I have read, and shall often read again, the first act of *Demetrio*, and am unable to describe to you the pleasure I have had in seeing one of my own children corrected of all natural defects, and ornamented with such qualities as the poverty of the parent could never bestow. I should be proud of its present magnificent appearance, if I did not recollect how many rivers, in their course, are increased by confluent waters, and enriched by gold, which they never derive from their niggard source. Do you my dear Pasquini, who have not so many motives of confusion as I, sustain your friend in this dilemma; take his place, and represent for me to this beneficent and royal protectress, the sentiments of veneration, gratitude and wonder, which I feel too forcibly for expression; and if you believe that my supplications can be of any efficacy, unite them with your own, and with those

(c) One species of torment is the excess of pleasure,  
of.

of the whole poetic family, that the terrible threat may never be put in practice, of depriving Parnassus of so illustrious a votary.

Represent likewise, I entreat you, with the most profound respect, how much I feel myself honoured by the clemency of the royal electoral prince, and recommend me as much as possible to his patronage. Tell him that in obedience to his commands, which are so glorious for me, I have already begun the revisal of my *Attilio Regolo* (*d*), and as soon as finished, it shall be consigned to the care of the Saxon minister at this court, for its greater security and dispatch. Happy will it be for me, if this my offspring is allowed, in my stead, to pay its court to a prince so worthy of universal admiration! And do you intercede, that my *Attilio* may never again return to Vienna, as it cannot obtain, in other hands, greater glory or protection.

I am very sensible that you are the favourable wind, which collects on my head this shower of royal favour; think then how grateful this must be to my heart, and how much it must encrease in me that sincere and

(*d*) This opera, written in 1740, was prevented from being performed, by the death of the emperor Charles VI.

tender

tender regard which I shall never cease to feel for you.

P. S. In sending my letters to the post, I have been put in possession of another parcel from you, containing the second act of *Demetrio*, and a cantata. In spite of hurry, I have twice run through this last. Oh poor Pasquini! and poor me! If sovereigns write such excellent poetry, what is to become of us wretched plebeian bards!

Vienna, Feb. 5th, 1749.

## L E T T E R XIII.

TO THE SAME.

LOADED with the applause and esteem of the whole city and court, our most amiable *Venturini* sets off on his return to Dresden; and carries with him my *Attilio Regolo*, in order to be presented to his royal highness the electoral prince of Saxony.

Since my last letter, having spoken to my most august patroness, I have obtained paternal and despotic power over my *Attilio*; so that I now completely enjoy the enviable felicity of being able to offer this small tribute to such a great and enlightened prince, who deigns to be so unlimitedly my protec-

tor. Let him lock it up in the secret recesses of his cabinet; expose it to vicissitudes of the stage; or gratify the curiosity of the public, by printing it, I shall always regard its fate as happy to what ever use it shall be destined by the arbitration of such a prince. Certain that my name and writings have sometimes the supreme glory to occupy his thoughts, I eagerly seize this opportunity of laying at his feet this small testimony of my submission and impatient gratitude. The gift is unworthy of him,

*Né che poco io vi dia da imputar feme  
Se quanto posso dar tutto vi dono.*

" If all I can bestow I freely give,  
" No blame is due for gift diminutive.

Though deceived by friendship yourself, you did wrong to deceive his highness with respect to the merit of *Attilio*; take care however to continue the deceit. The un-deceiving would now cost too much to him who is ever yours.

Vienna, Feb. 26th. 1749.

L E T-

## L E T T E R XIV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR letter of the 17th of last month, has really comforted me, with the certainty that you did not take amiss the liberty with which I treated your *Canzone*. But I was to blame for doubting it. You know me sufficiently to be certain, that criticism from me can flow from nothing but true friendship. I know too that you ask my opinion, not as is generally done, to procure praise, but to be more certain, by the vote of one in the trade. And I should feel guilty of treachery, if I did not wholly open my heart, even at the risk of displeasing you. So that I place among your most considerable merits, that exemplary docility which you possess, and which is so uncommon to poets.

And, in return, you should not forget to number among mine, the heroism with which I undertake to obey you, when in examining your works, I risk the cruel alternative, either of deceiving, or offending you. But I see how you think on these subjects, so that

that I may venture to use that freedom with you which I could not do with others.

Vienna, March 1, 1749.

## L E T T E R    X V.

TO THE SAME.

I AM enchanted with the 3d act of *Demetrio*, which arrived with your last letter. It seems to me as if the beneficent hand which has undertaken to enrich me, has been still more prodigal in this gift, than in either of the former. My dear Abate, if I was less fearful of being suspected of adulation, I should enlarge more on this subject. But the enormous distance between the writer and the encomiast, will but too much authorize suspicion. However, I cannot contain myself so entirely, as not to confess, candidly, that I had never believed it possible, to meet with so formidable a rival in the splendid bustle of a court. But this is all *entre nous*. In the fortunate moments that you will be allowed to speak to this incomparable Princess, forget not to make known what I think of her talents; you

cannot say half so much as I think, nor so little, perhaps, as not to offend. As my immediate plenipotentiary, your commission extends no further than to implore her royal patronage, and to represent, in every point of view, my profound veneration.

Would to heaven my *Attilio*, with all his father's defects on his head, may afford his Electoral Highness a moment's amusement, in return for the many favours with which his clemency has deigned to honour me. I recommend the poor pilgrim to your care : shew him the road, instruct, recommend, conduct, and let him, through your means, enjoy all the rights of hospitality. I know not whether he has more claims to favour than his brothers ; but he has certainly cost me the most pains in educating ; and is less deficient in that solidity, which, though they never arrived at it, I endeavoured to procure for them all.

I congratulate you on your beautiful ode on Count Bruhl. It has really surprised me, as I was ignorant of your powers in the Pindaric style. It is majestic, spirited, rich in thoughts and images, and full of the fire and fancy which characterize that species of composition. In short, it seems to me, as if

your

your Mecænus ought to be pleased with his Horace. I am much obliged by your communication of it, and wish you a long enjoyment of that juvenile vigour which such enterprises require.

It is very true that I have not only once, but many times, entreated various persons to remind the worthy Count Vacherbart of my ancient reverence and attachment to his person. I learned to respect him from the first moment of my arrival at this court, where he then resided; and the universal opinion of his singular merit, which has since increased, makes me proud of my sagacity.

I wish you much better health than you enjoyed when you wrote your last letter. Africa weeps, my dear Pasquini (*e*), and Italy does not smile: let us enjoy the few tranquil days which are still allowed us by providence, and tolerating the present evils, hope for future good.

Vienna, March 8, 1749.

(*e*) This seems to allude to the insults which the Italian States had received, at this time, from the Algerines; who, with a fleet of eleven ships, had alarmed the coast of Naples, intending to seize the King in the isle of *Porcida*, where he was hunting.

## LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE great occasion for your assistance, but much more for your counsel. And as I have no reason to think that you will deny me either, I shall proceed to business without preface.

You will remember, or if you should not, the annexed memorial will remind you, that I lost an office in the kingdom of Naples, to which I had been appointed by the Emperor Charles VI. All others under the same circumstances, at the peace, set about recovering their rights; I only remained tranquil, not being animated to any such hope by the general tenor of my perverse fortune. But all my friends, from whom my vanity could not conceal the innumerable favours with which I had been honoured by the clemency of your princes, have loudly and unanimously censured my indolence, in not applying to such powerful patrons, who might, with so much probability of success, favour my petition to the Queen of the two Sicilies. Not being able to resist these remonstrances,

monstrances, I have drawn up the inclosed memorial. Now begins your ministry, as counsellor and commissary.

As counsellor therefore, read, and consider both the letter and memorial; examine impartially, whether the justice of my cause deserves pity and protection. Tell me if it appears to you that I may safely implore the assistance of these royal personages, without appearing what I am not, a mercenary man; but in this second discussion, it is necessary I should assure you, that when I thought of doing myself the honour of laying my *Attilio* at the feet of the Electoral Prince, I never dreamed of my lost place in the kingdom of Naples. You know me well enough to believe this; but that is not sufficient. My protectors must likewise believe it; for I prize their good opinion much more than all the wealth of Crœsus. Examine, lastly, whether, without repugnance, your court would undertake to support my claims on that of Naples. If, on inquiry, you think the attempt improper, be silent, never mention the business, and I shall be indebted to you for your advice. If, however, you are of a different opinion, you then become my commissary.

In that case, throw yourself at the feet of their Royal Highnesses, explain the affair, and my want of protection ; implore their assistance ; procure me likewise, by their means, that of the King and Queen ; request the counsel and assistance of his excellency Count Vacherbart ; solicit recommendations, which will be more efficacious, the sooner they are procured. Visit, speak, write, and, in short, do every thing for me that I should do for you, in similar circumstances. I received no letter from you to-day, but flatter myself that want of health has not occasioned your silence. Continue to love me, however troublesome I may be.

Vienna, March 15, 1749.

## L E T T E R XVII.

TO THE SAME.

By your most welcome letter of the 10th instant, as well as by one from our dear Venturini, I am assured of the gracious reception of my pilgrim, *Attilio*, by his Electoral highness. I did not doubt of his clemency ; but confess, that I was very anxious for

for letters to confirm it ; as, besides the reverence due to a personage who unites to his eminent station so many virtues and accomplishments, I had conceived for him, after being presented to him at Vienna, a certain affection, which I should call love, if I knew how to reconcile that word with respect as well in my letter as in my heart. You, by long habit, will understand me ; therefore try, in proper time and place, to explain my meaning.

The thought of my last tiresome packet arriving in an evil hour, just when you were on the point of holding a serious conference with the good son of Maja, vexes me extremely. If I was as much a prophet as a poet, I should not have been guilty of so great a blunder. Pardon, and pity me, for weakly giving way to the cries of my friends, so far as to undertake an application, to which I felt a presaging repugnance. At present, I must write to our dear Venturini, which will be some relief to you. Communicate to him my letters, and the whole business. Decide together on the propriety of the application, and if it is agreed on, beg him to do every thing for me, that you would wish him to do for yourself. Adding

to the information, that the Marquis Malafina, the prime minister at Naples, has always manifested a partiality for me ; if, therefore, he should be deemed a fit instrument to second the principal impulse, forget not to make use of him.

I doubt not, but that powerful divinity, whose votary you are, will take as much care of your frame, as he has hitherto done of your genius. However, I am impatient to know from yourself the effects of his patronage. Gratify my affectionate solicitude, and fail not to let me know the progress of our suit.

Vienna, March 22, 1749.

## LETTER XVIII.

### TO THE SAME.

LAST Saturday evening, after I had written and sent my letter to the post, yours of the 17th instant was brought to me, and with it the copy of his excellency Count Vachebart's note. I could not then, to my great affliction, acknowledge the receipt of them, for want of time ; but to-day,

day, having more leisure, I perceive myself in a worse condition, for want of an honest excuse for my silence. Indeed this new and authentic testimony, of the extraordinary goodness with which the Electoral Prince and Princess honour me and my works, has so agitated my mind, that I am totally unable to write. I have no power to express the extraordinary emotions of vain-glory, confusion, gratitude, reverence, and many other effects, which I feel on this occasion. They are such temptations, my dear Abate, as would disturb the moderation of the most tranquil Lyceum, as well as the stormy Parnassus. Think of my honour; represent me such as I ought to be, for it may not be to my advantage were you to describe me such as I am. However, in the midst of this delight, I am sufficiently reasonable to perceive, from the style, the part which the most worthy writer has had in procuring me royal favour, and with how much pleasure he communicates it. Explain to him, in my name, the sensibility with which I perceive the obligations I have to his zeal.

Vienna, March 26, 1749.

L E T -

## LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE not leisure for a long answer to your letter of the 24th; but I shall hasten to satisfy your doubts: for the office required, will become more difficult to obtain, as the present circumstances of the peace become more distant. The following, therefore, are the particulars you wish to know previous to your application to Count Vacherbart. The place then, of which I demand the restitution, was not conferred on any other person, to my knowledge, at Vienna. This charge was estimated at a thousand Neapolitan ducats *per annum*; but I am unable to inform you whether it still retains its value. The King of Naples has restored all the confiscated places to such as have proved a valid title; and such is surely mine, having received it in lieu of a salary agreed on, but not paid. Whether any have been restored, that were free-gifts at Vienna, I know not. Remember that the Marquis Malaspina, will supply information and second endeavours, but will not be the first mover. The chief force

force must have come from higher powers. And an office *de communibus* is not sufficient. If you discover rocks, stop immediately. A zephyr will not suffice for our navigation, we must have a brisk gale. I rejoice most heartily at your recovery.

Vienna, March 29, 1749.

## L E T T E R XX.

### TO THE SAME.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, in great haste, the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, and beg that the reasons may cease which prevented your answering mine. The Marquis Malaspina has not told you a single circumstance of which I had not previously apprised you. If my affair could have been adjudged in a court of justice, I should not have applied to such great protectors. My *receivership* was not granted as *a compensation for merit*; it was an equivalent for a portion of *promised salary, not assigned*. I asked four thousand florins, the sum allowed Apostolo Zeno; three only were granted, and, for excuse, it was said that the exchequer could be charged with no more; but it was promised to be made up to me by some other means.

means. Hence the protection rested on the proverb: that unpaid merit may pass for ready money. Nor do I well know how a court of justice could be called on to enforce such promises of reward; though, in equity, the refusal would have a bad appearance. But these are all reveries, to which your letter led me; they shall be written however, since you wish it, to Count Richecourt, though I must confess that I do not approve your plan. We daily advance into the crowd of human wants, and yet you would renounce, in a great measure, the means of supplying them. But enough of this. If the thing is resolved, all counsel is vain. Addio, dear Pasquini.

Vienna, April 12, 1749.

## L E T T E R   XXI.

### TO THE SAME.

By your kind letter of the 24th instant, I perceive with what zeal the Electoral Prince Royal has undertaken to patronize my pretensions. Upon so solid a foundation, I seem authorized to build great hopes; and if these should fail, there will always remain the glorious remembrance of a patronage, which

which does me so much honour. I entreat you, my dear Abate, in some dextrous moment, to represent to this royal protector, how much my respect is increased by his benevolence. Nor forget to attest to his excellency Count Vacherbart, how sincerely I acknowledge myself indebted to him, for the royal propensity towards me, which his example has procured. I have no doubt, but that the fear of precedent will be pleaded against me. But against this objection, several expedients are suggested in my memorial.

Vienna, April 26, 1749.

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## L E T T E R XXII.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

YOUR very kind letter of the 2d of May deserved no censure, I know how affectionately you wished to keep the correspondence alive, without writing merely for the sake of writing, contrary to stipulation. Nor is your letter so empty as you pretend. The assurances of your having discovered how sincerely the Marquis della Rocca, and Count Ormea loved me; and your interpretations  
of

of the most amiable Madame del Bene, are very plausible materials and occasions for a letter, without any other legal pretext. Return aloud, in my name, to the two first, the most tender and respectful acknowledgments; protest to the third, in a more modest tone, but not less expressive, how sensible I am of the honour which she is pleased to confer on me.

You are much mistaken if you suppose me to be an enthusiastic collector of Antiques. I have none in my possession, except a few for common use. My purse and patience are engaged in more necessary works. It would be insupportable to me, if I were constantly in the hands of impostors. I would give the whole *museum Florentinum*, for some little piece of excellent modern workmanship, which has neither undergone the examination of that nor any other academy. You see how capricious my poeticks are, by this confession. Count Canale salutes you cordially. I beg you will not forget to recommend me to the orisons of your priestess, and believe me most constantly yours.

Vienna, May 28, 1749.

END OF THE FIFTH SECTION.

## S E C T I O N VI.

## L E T T E R. I.

TO FARINELLI.

A THOUSAND blessings light on, my admirable Gemello! Your letter of the 28th of January has generously astonished our poor Migliavacca, with the gift of 300 Ungheri. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could believe it real. He knew he did not merit any such sum, though he was in such extreme want of it, that he absolutely thought it to have been miraculously sent, by the holy King David, the protector of poets. It has given me infinite pleasure to think myself, in some measure, the instrument which providence has used in succouring this poor man; and still more, that the rumour of such uncommon generosity does so much honour to my dear twin brother. Migliavacca will not be silent; and I have filled both the city and court with the story. I have every day the satisfaction

satisfaction of being called upon by persons of the highest distinction, to confirm the fact, and consequently of being required to repeat the narration, and of observing what universal justice is done you. How happy it makes me to perceive that we think alike. There are thousands and thousands of old and new reasons to prove that ,you have done right. The world will not soon forget to speak of you.

I am glad the *Armida placata* pleases you, and I believe, under your direction, that it cannot fail of success. To satisfy you with respect to the embellishments at the end, which you seem to wish, I have two expedients ; these I have pointed out to Migliavacca, and when he has executed them in the manner agreed on, I will, as usual, lend a hand, in order that you may be served as you ought. In one of these expedients, it is proposed, by the power of enchantment, to introduce into the texture of the drama, the court of Apollo or the Sun, according to your wish. But as the destruction of the enchantment is necessary to the catastrophe of the opera, the last eight or ten verses must be recited in the natural grove which was seen at the beginning of the piece.

And with this I know not whether you will be satisfied. A similar expedient was, however, received with applause in my *Sogno di Scipione*. Another method of introducing a magnificent scene with whatever machinery you may wish, is to have a *Licenza*, or compliment at the end, wholly detached from the texture of the drama ; appropriating the whole festival to a name-day, or birth-day, of some royal personage. In this case, the action may be terminated without being maimed : and the scene changed to the Palace of the Sun, with as much splendor and magnificence, as you please. Here our master Apollo, angry with the Muses, and the Genii their followers, with which the machine will be filled, in a pompous recitative and air, will tell them, he wonders extremely that being engaged to sing the praises of the Gods of *Mansanare* \*, they should lose their time in representing the madness of *Rinaldo* and *Armida*. And commanding them all, upon pain of excommunication, to follow him instantly and begin the work : the Muses and Genii, immediately rising from their seats on the stage, in order to obey him, form a magnificent

\* The river, on the banks of which Madrid is built.

dance to the harmony of a full chorus, wishing the audience a good night. In this expedient it is neither necessary that the performance should be on a name or birth-pay. The *Licenza*, or farewell, may be contrived to serve for any other common day, as every day is proper to pay respect to the sovereign of a court. For my own part, I should not hesitate a moment, my dear Farinelli, to adopt this second method: as the first, to my conception, would always appear like a wen, or tail added to the festival, which does not fit, and spoils the catastrophe; and at last, to these disadvantages, must be added that of returning *all' orrido Bosco*\*, for the final verses. Oh, but say you, if the first manner is so bad, why propose, write, and correct it? Softly, softly, my master. In the first place, if you will absolutely adopt it, there would be no heresy in it worthy of the inquisition. And, secondly, I must have convinced you, that if, unluckily, every thing is not arranged to your mind, it is not for want of pains, but literally from the impossibility of the enterprise. Migliavacca will fend you, by the

\* *To the borrid wood.*—The final chorus of the opera.

next post, what has been doing; and, finally, I return to the charge of recommending to you the choice of the second expedient for a *Licenza*.

When, in the name of wonder, will my blessed picture arrive; Prince Trivulzi every post assures me, that you ought to have received it by this time. We shall see whether my evil genius will not pursue, even my portrait.

I do not remind you of the Neapolitan affair, as it would be an injury to your friendship to imagine it wanted a stimulus. If ever it should succeed, I shall make such a noise about it, that, for your sovereign's glory and your own, it shall extend to China.

You flatter my vanity too much in making me hope that my writings sometimes obtain the approbation of so enlightened a princess, as your royal mistress. Such temptations as these would vanquish the moderation of the most humble and resigned philosopher. Think then what a tumult they must raise in the breast of a poet! Do you, my dear Gemello, who thanks to the singular talents with which providence has furnished you, have the supreme happiness of approaching her throne, implore for me

so great a patronage; and in letting her know that I am not a stranger to the praises of her numerous royal qualities, try to obtain for me the sovereign influence of her favour.

My nose and my health are extremely thankful to you for having thought of them. They ought in gratitude to be both employed in your service; yet I own myself at a loss how to use the first with any hope of giving you pleasure.—But stay—I will saddle it with a huge pair of spectacles every time I write to you, though hitherto I have had no occasion for them.

All the ladies whom you salute, return your salutations, but particularly the countess of Althan. The poor countess of Fouchs is still struggling with a terrible cough, which had reduced her to a skeleton. At present her life is not in immediate danger, but her recovery will, inevitably, be very slow. By this time you must be sufficiently tired. Pray love me in exchange for the friendship, esteem, and affection, which I shall ever retain for you.

Vienna, March 8, 1749.

L E T -

## LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

AND so your hand writing is so precious, that there is no aspiring at the possession of such a blessing, without having first sighed for it many Olympiads ! Ah barbarous ! Ungrateful man ! Hyrcanian tiger ! Deaf adder ! Mountain cat ! Tarantula of Apulia ! In so many months could it never enter your head, to let me know that you were alive ! I believe that the streams of *Mansanare* are the waters of Lethe, and that you swim in them like a trout. I believe that you have entirely forgot my name, and if any one should mention it, you would ask, who is this Metaftasio ? I made Migliavacca correct the *Armida Placata*, and it was speedily transmitted to you. I wrote to you about this and my own affairs. I hoped that my picture must be arrived by this time, and the delicate commission I gave you, executed ; but with all these *stimuli*, not one sign of life is given. I would have you take care of your self. Either contrive to disarm my poetical fury, or I shall transfix you with a satire in

your praise, sufficient to make the beard of the Farnese Hercules tremble, though made of stone. And here I begin. A beautiful lady whose nods are laws, knowing that we are friends, will have me write to you in order to propose for your theatre, a siren of ours, whom she protects. The siren recommended is called *Colomba Mattgi*; she is a Roman, and seems about two or three and twenty, at most. Her voice is a soprano, clear in tone, without defects; has great agility, and extends, with ease, to two octaves, from B to b. Sings in good taste, and has a good *portamento*. She has a well proportioned figure, fine eyes, is not ugly, acts well, and is very ambitious of distinguishing herself by her performance. Here she has acquired universal applause, as well for her singing, as action; though on the same stage with our African, the *Tesi*, the capricious Caffariello, and a tenor in the service of the Elector of Cologn, called Raaff, who sings like a seraph. I, who am the father of all doubters, hear her with pleasure, and should not know what more to wish in her, if her stature, which is so genteel and well proportioned, had a little more height, and her voice, with all its sweetness and agility, had a very

a very little more fullness. She has performed three years at Palermo, as first woman; at Naples, as second, with the Astrua; as first at the court of Bareith, in the nominal service of which she is at present; and now she is second to the Tesi; but will sing no more as second, unless with a few of the most celebrated professors on the stage; as she knows that the rest are not better than herself. The gentlemen who direct the opera, have already requested her to remain here another season; but she keeps them in suspense, having heard from some Maestro di Capella or other, before she quitted Naples, that she would have an application from Madrid; and it appears to me, that she is more partial to the Doubloons of Spain, than the Ungheri of Germany. I am not anxious that you should engage her; but I very much wish that the lady who patronises her, should be convinced how implicitly she has been obeyed. So that if you do not want her, at least write me a letter that may preserve my credit. But if you should wish to enter into a treaty with her, in order to save time, at so enormous a distance, you might include in your letter to me, a sketch of an article, specifying the salary and the conditions by

which it is to be obtained ; and by this sketch, I shall regulate my conduct, always studying your interest most assuredly more than that that of any other. I must tell you, that I make a great sacrifice, by entering into this theatrical negociation. Though if you were to see from what beautiful lips the commands I execute came, you would approve my condescension. But let us have done with sirens\*.

How am I to account for your profound silence about my lost place, which has so

\* By this account of the opera singers at Vienna, in 1749, we may judge of Metastasio's opinions, candour, and good taste, in speaking of vocal talents. *Caffarelli* came young into England, to great disadvantage, as the immediate successor of *Farinelli*; but afterwards mounted to the summit of his art, not only in talents, but *caprice*. The *Tesi* never was in England, nor a favourite of Metastasio; but as an actress, as well as singer, in a grand, more than an amiable style, she acquired great reputation, particularly in the German courts. His character of the *Mattei* is exact to the nicest degree of discrimination, as many persons still living, who saw and heard her afterwards in England, as second woman with *Mingotti*, and first with *Potenza* and *Elizi*, will allow. And the high praise he has bestowed on the celebrated Tenor, *Raaf*, was that of every feeling judge of vocal abilities who heard him. See characters of all these opera singers : *Musical Tours*, and *Hist. of Music*, vol. iv.

long

long afflicted me? You have perhaps lost all courage at the first repulse? Has a flight contrary wind then made you run into port? No, my dear Gemello: such little fortitude would never characterize you. With a fair wind, no one would ever have recourse to the powers of Farinelli. It is from the difficulties of the enterprise, that it becomes worthy of his care. If the doors are not opened at the first attempt, they may perhaps at the second. And it happens frequently, that he who resists the first assault, at the second, is vanquished. Remember that you are combatting for your fellow twin, in a most just cause. And if it should be gained, it would be no disgrace in the eyes of Europe, either to those who granted, or those who solicited, the favour.

You will, perhaps, be curious to know how Caffariello has been received; and here follows the true history. The wonders related of him by his adherents, had excited expectations of something above humanity; but the first night, he absolutely displeased every body, and was most clearly and universally disapproved. He said that he was so oppressed and disconcerted by the presence of their Imperial Majesties, that he could not recover

recover himself; and indeed, in the subsequent representations, he regained his credit so much, that some of the nobility and gentry now exalt him to the firmament, and even go so far as to make heretical comparisons. There are, however, innumerable critics, who find his voice strong, but false, screaming, and disobedient; so that he can do nothing considerable without forcing it, and when forced, it becomes harsh and disagreeable. They say that he has no judgment, and by frequently attempting what he is unable to execute, leaves it half finished; that he has an old fashioned and bad taste, and pretend, that they can discover in his graces, the antique and stale flourishes of *Niccolini* and *Mateuccio*. They cry out, that no one ever trod the stage worse; that in the recitatives he is an old nun; and in all he sings, there constantly reigns a whimpering tone of lamentation, sufficient to sour the gaiest allegro\*. They allow that he can sometimes please, even to excess; but say, that these happy moments are uncertain, and depend on the caprice of his voice and

\* This, with respect to the tone of his voice, is exactly the effect which Marchesi's first performance on the English stage, had on the writer of these memoirs.

disposition,

disposition, and do not make amends for what his imperfections oblige them to suffer. You will be pleased to observe, that I only cite, but do not decide: on the contrary, I protest to you, that I have all the esteem for this performer, which he merits.

The disgrace of the first night, the diversity of opinions, and the little appearance there is of his having acquired the favour of our most august patroness, a princess whom you know to be an exquisite judge of music, have humbled him so extremely, that from his present modesty and resignation, you would not know him. If he continues in this disposition, I hope he will acquire many of those suffrages which were at first refused to him.

Our Countess of Althan, who during these occurrences, has a most lively remembrance of you, sends you a thousand salutations. And I, suspending my choler, embrace you with my usual, but ill returned affection.

Vienna, May 28, 1749.

Metastasio more frequently complains of the tension of his nerves, and of hypochondriac affections, this year (1749) than at any other

other period of his life ; and yet, in his letters, he has given frequent proofs of hilarity, particularly in writing to his first and constant patroness, the Princess di Belmonte. Two of these letters, not in the collection published at Nice, have been inserted in Sig. Saverio Mattei's *Memoirs of the poet*.

The first contains an account of an earthquake that happened in Germany, in June 1749, which he describes in the following manner.

“ On Monday was sevennight, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we were favoured with the unexpected visit of an earthquake, an animal hardly known in these regions. The effects of this visit were certainly not slight, as there is scarcely a single person here who did not perceive it ; and if the city has escaped from damage, the environs and the country have suffered considerably, by the appearance of great bodies of water, without knowing whence they came, and which have inundated considerable tracts of land. The motion was not, as usual, undulatory, from side to side, but upwards and downwards, which will perhaps account for the little damage which the buildings sustained. The principal shock was preceded and

and followed by others, but much less violent. Your excellency will easily believe, that we are full of terrors; as indeed we well may, as this is one of the least amusing of all nature's sports; and as it has happened in a country not at all used to compliments of this kind, it is natural that, besides the usual fear on such occasions, it should have produced all the symptoms of a terrible surprise. You will take it for granted, that our churches are full, and our theatres empty; our musicians idle, and our preachers fatigued; that we are covered with fack-cloth and ashes, and, in short, that Vienna resembles Nineveh in penitence. But your excellence will now be pleased to observe, how possible it is, from good reasoning, to draw false conclusions. Nothing of all this has happened. The theatres were never more frequented; the inhabitants more serene; or assemblies more cheerful. We did indeed, for about two days, talk of this unexpected guest; but not more than we should have done of a Rhinoceros, an Elephant, or any other strange animal. At the time I am writing this letter, it is no longer spoken of: and the journey of Mademoiselle *Taglia-*  
*wini*, the dancer, through this city, from

Italy to Dresden, has instantly superseded all kind of mention of the earthquake in our conversation. Your Excellence will conclude, from this most faithful account, how much more quiet our consciences are here, than elsewhere : and that nature has benignly furnished us with that fortitude and equanimity, without trouble, which, in other countries, is only to be acquired by a long and painful study of philosophy. Nor is your Excellency to believe, that this heroism is granted here to none but the Germans : this hospitable climate communicates its privileges, even to foreigners : for I have observed the same firmness in all the Italians resident in this city. So true it is, that cowardise is a disorder which is caught by the mind, as the small-pox or measles by the body."

In a second letter to the same princess, dated July the 5th, we have a very pleasant and lively relation of a *Tweedle-dum* and *Tweedle-dee* quarrel, which had just happened in the Opera-house at Vienna.

" In exchange for the musical news with which your Excellence has honoured me, concerning our amiable friend, *Monticelli*, I shall give you some military tidings of our valiant *Caffarelli*, who a few days ago, gave public

public proofs of his being no less a votary of Mars, than of Apollo. For my misfortune, I was not present at these military feats: but the following is a most faithful narrative.

The Poet of this theatre, is a Milanese young man, descended from very worthy parents; but inconsiderate, a great admirer of the fair sex, despising money, and not more rich in abilities, than deficient in judgment. To this young author, the managers of this theatre have confided, not only the settling the books of the words, but all the arrangements of the stage. I know not whether it proceeded from rivalry of talents, or personal beauty, but the poet and the singer, from the beginning, have been upon the *qui vive*, and treated each other with sneers and sarcasms. At length, *Migliavacca* (the poet) issued out orders for a rehearsal of the opera that was preparing. All the performers obeyed the summons, except *Caffarelli*; whose absence was occasioned, either by a mutinous spirit, or an innate aversion to every species of obedience. However, at the end of the rehearsal, he appeared; and to the salutations of the company, in a very contemptuous and disdainful manner, asked, *What was the use of*

*these rehearsals?* The Coryphaeus answered, in a voice of authority, that “ No one was obliged to be accountable to him for what was doing ; that he ought to be glad that his own failure of attendance had been suffered : that his presence or his absence would be of little utility to the success of the opera ; and though he did what he pleased himself, he ought, at least, to let others do their duty.” *Caffarelli* violently irritated at the air of authority which *Migliavacca* had assumed, politely interrupted him by saying, that “ he who had ordered such a rehearsal was a solemn coxcomb.”—Here all the patience and dignity of the director left him ; and suffering himself to be blindly transported from a poetical fury, to a more ignoble rage, he honoured the chanter with all those glorious titles which *Caffarelli* had merited in different parts of Europe ; and slightly touched, but in very lively colours, some of the most memorable transactions of his life ; nor was he likely soon to come to a close ; but the hero of his panegyric, cutting the thread of his own praise, boldly cried out to the panegyrist ; “ follow me, if thou hast courage, to a place where there is no one to assist thee : ” then moving towards the

the door, beckoned him to come out. The perplexed and threatened poet remained a moment in doubt: then smiling, he says; " truly such a rival as thee makes me blush: but come along! since the chastising madmen and fools is always a christian work." And then advanced in order to take the field. But *Caffarelli* having either thought that the Muses would not be so valiant, or that, according to the rules of the criminal law, a delinquent ought to be punished *in loco patrati delicti*, changed his first resolution of seeking another field of battle, and intrenching himself behind the door, drew his bright blade, and presented the point to the enemy.. Nor did the other refuse the contest :

*Ma fiero anch'egli il rilucente acciaro  
Liberò dalla placida guarina.*

But freeing from its peaceful scabbard, he  
Fiercely the shining steel displays.

The spectators tremble: each calling on his titular saint; expecting every moment to see poetical and vocal blood smoke upon the harpsichords and double-bases. Till, at length, the *Signora Teſi*, rising from under her canopy, where, till now, she had re-

mained a most tranquil spectator, walked gently, and in a stately step, towards the combatants. When (Oh ! sovereign power of beauty !) the mad *Caffarelli*, in the most violent ebullition of his wrath, captivated and appeased, by this unexpected tenderness, meets her with rapture; throws away his sword, or rather lays it at her feet; begs pardon for his error, generously sacrificing to her his vengeance, and sealing repeated protestations of obedience, respect, and humiliation, with a thousand kisses impressed on the hand of the arbitress of his fury. The nymph signified forgiveness by a nod; the poet sheathed his sword; the spectators began to breathe; and to the joyous sound of horseLaughs, the tumultuous assembly was dissolved. In collecting the numbers of the wounded and the slain, none was found but the poor copyist, who contracted, in trying to separate the combatants, a small contusion in the clavicular of the foot, from an involuntary kick of *Migliavacca's* Pegasus. The next day the battle was recorded in an anonymous sonnet; and soon after, an answer was produced by the belligerant poet. I hope to procure a copy of both, to inclose in this letter. To day the German com-

medians will represent this extraordinary event on the stage. They say, that already not a place is to be had for love or money, and it is not yet twelve o'clock. I should be very glad to be one of the audience, if I were possessed of an invisible ring.

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## LETTER III.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

I WAS meditating a satire in your praise, to revenge my sufferings from your barbarous silence, when the Venetian ambassador sent me your most affectionate letter of the 6th of May, written at Aranjues. I ought to conceal from you the ascendant you have over my soul, and the rapidity with which your hand writing not only appeased my wrath, but represented to my mind the most minute circumstances of your merit, against which I have no defence. Pray make no bad use of this confession ; be more humane in future ; and do not rely too much on the sweetness of my temper. There is no bitter so insupportable, as that which arises from corrupted sweetness. You remember the Neapolitan pumpkins, called *winter melons* :

while they are found, how nectareous ! But the instant they begin to decay, how poisonous ! Suppose your Metastasio to be one of them, take care that he is not spoiled, if you wish not to be poisoned. Thank heaven ! my picture has at length reached you. Oh how I envy its good fortune to be always in the company of my dear Gemello, while I am separated from him by half Europe ! I confess great obligations to the portrait, as it has procured to the original the approbation of those most clement monarchs. The account you have given me, is sufficient to turn the heads of all the hermits of the Thebaid ; consider then what effect it must have had upon the mind of a poor grasshopper of Parnassus, naturally vain, like the rest of the poetical tribe. I never cease, from morning to night, repeating to myself *Se le conosce en la cara, &c. (f)*. What a prodigious fatigue is it not to believe all this, and tell it to the whole world ! This glory I owe to you, consider therefore how much I think myself obliged to you.

I am certain that Migliavacca is perfectly contented with the magnificent present

(f) A Neapolitan old ballad.

which

which you procured him, and believe he will never have such another as long as he lives, nor one acquired with less fatigue. Indeed he only spoiled what I had sketched out; and obliged me, for the credit of my interposition, and for your sake, to new write the principal scenes; to help the feet of the limping songs, and, in short, to give myself more trouble than if he had not written a single verse. It is, however, sufficient, that, by dint of scolding and fretting, the piece is likely to have a good effect, if the person who performs the part of *Armida* is a good *Actrice*. I am unacquainted with the first woman, and therefore can form no prognostics. All I am certain of is, that the superb present made to Migliavacca has afforded me much more pleasure than I should have experienced if you had procured me a Cardinal's cap. It afforded me a fine text to preach on through the court and city; and an opportunity of acquainting every body with the noble and generous way of thinking of my dear Farinelli, for which I love him still more than for that excellence which sets him at the head of all the tuneful hierarchy.

Would to heaven I could boast, my dear friend, that the nerves of my poor head corresponded with the placid countenance which the painter has been pleased to give to my portrait. This letter was begun the 19th, will be finished, God willing, to-day, the 25th. When I apply with a little attention, the nerves of my sensorium are put into a violent tumult. I grow as red as a drunkard; and am obliged to quit my work, or heaven knows what might be the consequence. Most people are deceived by appearances, which they do not believe; and my Imperial Mistress has been, and perhaps is now, in the same error as yourself. However, in revenge for my not having written any thing during the last five years, though it was very much wished, she has increased my salary, a few weeks ago, 500 florins, annually, for which I never had the least idea of soliciting. Think how much I must blush at finding myself so unable to manifest my gratitude for this Imperial bounty, which being spontaneous during such an adverse period as the present, is of infinitely more value, than much greater gifts, granted to solicitation in prosperous times. I have therefore determined to try the strength  
of

of my head this summer (if we are to have any, for we still wear cloth clothes), and give a testimony to my sovereign of my inclination, at least, by some production, long, short, good or bad, as it may happen.

From this too faithful account, my dear Gemello may judge what promise I am able to make, to furnish the opera you wish for your court. If there is an individual in the world whom I wish to please, be assured that it is yourself. But how can I attempt it, while I am so deep in my sovereign's debt for past indolence? If my complaints should abate sufficiently to enable me to write the composition I meditate, after duty is fulfilled, you will be my first thought. I swear it to you on the altar of friendship: a divinity invoked by all, though very little respected; yet I hope to convince you that my devotion is free from hypocrisy.

What a magnificent air is that which you have sent me! If you had not confided to me, who was the author of it, I should have discovered him by those *Portamenti di voce*, which at present are no longer in fashion among the bunglers of modern times. We have enjoyed this air many times, reasonably well executed, in Althan House;

but this balm is poisoned, by reflecting upon the almost utter impossibility of our ever hearing it in its perfection, from the mouth of the master of masters. Oh how much have the Countess Althan and all the company talked of you ! And with how many commissions am I charged ! Imagine to yourself expressions worthy of your merit ; as the writing them would require a volume instead of a letter.

I perceive by your last, that you have not forgotten my Neapolitan affair ; I am grateful to you for it. But our operations go on so slowly, that I cannot preface much good I foresaw the difficulties we were likely to encounter, through all the justice of my cause ; and if you were not the pilot of my vessel, I should give her over for lost. But of this, enough at present ; be not discouraged by the difficulties, and remember that you toil for your most faithful friend.

Vienna, June 19, 1749.

L E T.

## LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH I wrote you a long letter but a few days ago, I cannot refrain from embracing you again, in consequence of letters which I have just received from Naples. These letters inform me, that the difficulties concerning the restitution of my place are very great, on account of its having been sold ; but at the same time assure me, that the applications in my favour come from *crowned heads*. Hence I discover with what integrity of heart, and ardour of true friendship, you have worked for me. So that though no advantage should ever be derived from it, I shall remember it during my whole life ; and you will always remain the dearest object of my reflections. In short, my dear and admirable Charles, is not only the patriarch of the whole tuneful hierarchy, but the king of honest men, and model of true friends. God preserve you, for the consolation of those who love you, and the confusion of all those who want the goodness of heart to imitate you !

That

That the court of Naples should disburse the money to indemnify the purchaser of the *Precettoria*, is a difficulty first cousin to impossibility ; but in order to second the benevolent zeal of your court, a compensation might easily be found for the purchaser, or for me. To me, for example, why, in a desperate case, could not an *ecclesiastical* benefice be given, which costs nothing ? And if any one should be vacant, and you think this expedient feasible, pray make use of it according to your own discretion. If I should again recommend this affair to you, I should be the most ungrateful of mortals. You not only are no dealer in smoke, but work for me, even without taking to yourself the merit of informing me of it ; and I hear from every one of your activity, except from yourself. Those great personages who favour you, and think you so worthy of their affection, have good reason for what they do. Adieu, dear Gemello. If you were near me, you would read better in my face, than in my letter, the transport of affection and gratitude which this new testimony of your kindness has impressed on my mind ; a transport, however, which does not depend on the

success

succeſſ of the enterprise, but on your ſincere, friendly, and generous activity.

Vienna, June 27, 1749.

## L E T T E R V.

### TO THE SAME.

THE rapturous gratitude and affection which overflowed in my laſt letter, concerning the news which I had received from Naples, did not allow me tranquillity to tranſcribe the Cantata which I now incloſe. Your manner of acting appeared to me ſo generous and uncommon, that I could think of nothing else. The general practice is to promise much, and do very little; but you do a great deal, and ſay nothing. So that my intelligence of the kind offices which you perform for me in Spain, comes from Naples. In ſhort, there is but one Farinelli. I am proud to find that the irrefutable inclination which I always felt to attach myſelf to you, is ſo reasonable. I wish you to believe, that whatever may be the termination of this buſineſſ, my gratitude will ever remain the fame: for you have convinced me, that if it were in your power to elect me Pope, I might already begin to grant Indulgencies:

Indulgencies : and this is sufficient to bind the heart and affection of an honest man. Success does not depend on ourselves.

I inclose two Cantatas : the first for two voices, consisting of recitative, with two airs for graceful music, and a very tender duet. The interlocutors are an affectionate nymph, and a shepherd naturally jealous ; and I should hope, that seasoned by your notes, and executed to your satisfaction, it might have an effect. The other is a Cantata for a single voice, in a more cheerful style. An ingenuous man speaks in it to a little nymph of the bird kind, who wishes to entangle him ; which he does not perceive. If you knew the original, the copy would not displease you. But such originals abound every where ; and you will find some of them at Madrid. The recitative is very long ; but the force of the cantata lies only in the recitative. If it will serve you for no other purpose, divert yourself with reading it. As neither this nor the other has yet been published, that circumstance will, perhaps, give them some value, if they can boast of no other.

I must inform you, that I sing your air like a seraph : Count Anthony of Althan plays

plays the first violin ; the other performers are unknown to you. But, my good master, you must not laugh at us, as, by the confession of many, we do you very great honour : so spare your ridicule, I entreat you.

But à propos to ridicule, I believe I committed a great blunder in my last letter. It seems as if I said, that in a desperate case, if the place could not be restored, an equivalent might be solicited in an *ecclesiastical benefice, which would cost the royal treasury nothing* : now I ought to have said, an *ecclesiastical pension*, and not a benefice. As, I believe, to be qualified for a benefice, the candidate should be a native, though not for a pension. But these are only hints for a desperate case, to which, with your support, I hope we shall never be driven. For by accounts from Naples, as I find the tree was shook by the first blow it received from you, it is to be hoped that, by another little stroke, it will fall. But I have already teased you too much on this subject. Adieu.

Vienna, July 9, 1749.

The next letter to Farinelli dwells on a long, and now uninteresting discussion of his

his Neapolitan claims, and is ended in the following manner.

## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

I BEGAN a little drama, to please my august Mistress, but have been obliged to discontinue it. My head suffers cruelly from the slightest exercise of intellect. It is a barbarous thing, my dear friend, and still more barbarous, as it is difficult to be believed. However, I shall try again, as I am ashamed of my inactivity, though involuntary. I beg you to believe firmly that, next to my patroness, to whom my first duty is due, I shall place my dear Gemello before all the monarchs upon earth. From the courts of Turin and Dresden, besides many other places of less consequence, I have been assailed with offers innumerable; but life is a *fardle, number one*. And we must preserve it as long as God pleases. The sum total of all this is, that if I am able to work for anyone except my patroness, it will be for you. Though you have not promised to take care of my Neapolitan business, I know it will not

not be forgotton, and I am already as much indebted to you as if it was happily finished. I know that twins only labour with such zeal and efficacy as you have done.

I should not discontinue writing, but it is late, and I am tired. All salutations are returned to you, and I embrace you with my accustomed affection.

Vienna, August 16, 1749.

## L E T T E R VII.

### TO THE SAME.

I WAS just in the act of pulling on my boots for my usual journey into Moravia, at this time of the year, when your most delightful letter from Madrid, of the 29th of July, was brought to me; but the postilion waits, and I cannot let him depart without an answer for my dearest Charles. I should seem to travel with a sting in my conscience, which would let me have no peace during the whole journey; and with such a sin on my back, God knows how many spokes may be broken, how often I may be overturned, how many horses may become restiff, or how many drunken postilions

tilians may rob me of all patience. No, no, let us avoid all danger.

I feel at this very time, that a chest of Vanilla chocolate, snuff, and bark, tributes which India furnishes to Spain, and your great heart to me, are under fail. By the gift I judge of the donor. My palate flattered with such delicious beverage, my nose so delightfully tickled, my veins furnished with such guards against all irregular effervescence of the blood, and every other member of my very frail little frame, through envy or pleasure, are all in such a tumult of gratitude, as to protest that all their motions shall be regulated in future by the nod of their generous benefactor. You who are a great algebraist, calculate yourself, in the first place, how much I love and esteem you; then how dear every thing is that comes from you, though in itself indifferent; afterwards, find out how much I am delighted with every new testimony of your affection; and, finally, the intrinsic value of the gift; sum up all these together, and then, if arithmetic can go so far, give me the product.

But alas! my very short acknowledgements appear already too prolix to your vir-

gin modesty; you already blush, grow impatient and angry, but I laugh at all this; and see you are already appeased.

What is the beautiful Castellini doing; and is it true that, she is so pleased with my salutations? that she means to honour me with her correspondence? Ah! if you love me, let not my friendship be put to so great a trial. After the alluring description which you have given of this amiable person, the violent temptation of a letter would precipitate me into the commission of some mental infidelity, for which I should be inconsolable. Tell her, however, that, as a twin, I can only receive the emotions of your heart at the rebound; that when I hear your name, I feel a certain tingling sensation which incommodes me, and yet I have no wish that it should be discontinued; that if the Manzanare was not so distant from the Danube, I should have come to try whether she would receive me with open arms, as she does my salutations; and tell her—No Sir, tell her nothing. The road is too slippery, and it is easier to keep out of it, than, when entered, to avoid falling.

I would not have you imagine, that my journey into the country will occasion the

least prejudice to the affairs of Sig. Rodolfo. I leave them in the hands of a zealous agent, and most amiable friend, who is on the watch, and ready to write to me, if any material occurrence should happen. It is unlucky that the Emperor is continually moving about from place to place: now in Hungary, now in Moravia, now in the chace, now encamped, or at the Baths. During these last two months, he has not been four days in his palace in this neighbourhood. When he is stationary there, at this time of the year, he is three miles distant from the city, and the poor agents are forced to run many times after him, before they can catch him flying.

I thank you for your categorical answer to Mademoiselle Mattei, I have had it read to the person who gave me the commission, and that's all I wanted.

The postilion sounds his horn, and I must conclude. All who know that I am writing to you, beg to be remembered; but I am not in a humour to write all their names. Our dear Countess of Althan must, however, not be omitted, who is as partial to you as ever.

Vienna, September 6, 1749.

## LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

BEHOLD me again at Vienna; where I have to answer your two letters of the 23d, and 30th of September. But the chapters are different, and must be separated; let us begin with the most easy.

I ordered, even from the country, Migliavacca to have the *Licenza* ready for you, whenever it might be wanted. On my return hither, I immediately sent for him, and on Saturday morning made him read, correct what he had done, and inclose the *Licenza* you requested in a letter, with my affectionate salutations, and an assurance that I only postponed writing myself, till Wednesday, when I hoped to have it in my power to say something positive to you concerning Cavalli. Yesterday I was informed that Migliavacca, in coming from the opera, was suddenly attacked in his way home; received two violent wounds in his head, by persons unknown, and that, as yet, there was no determining what would be the consequence.

Not being the most exact commissary in the world, God knows whether he had written the letter and sent away the *Licenza*, as I had desired him, previous to this event. In his present state, it would seem devoid of all christian charity to disturb him about this business: I have therefore tried to recollect the *Licenza*, have read it over and over again, chewed it, and really believe that I have recovered every line. I have transcribed and enclosed it, that it may arrive in time.—But behold! Here comes a person who informs me, that last night Migliavacca was at the theatre! A proof that the wounds were not very serious; they will I hope however serve as correctives.

Now I have room, and have written so little, I shall add a few words, as an advertisement, not a recommendation. Know then, that a Neapolitan Maestro di Capella of the name of JOMELLI, has set two of my operas here. He is about thirty-five years of age, of a spherical figure (g), pacific disposition, with an engaging countenance, most pleasing manners, and excellent morals. He has surprised me. I have found in him all the harmony of Hasse, with all the

(g) Jomelli was remarkably corpulent.

grace,

grace, expression, and invention of Vinci. At present he is gone to Venice, to bring on the stage my *Ciro*, and returns immediately to Vienna, to do the same piece of service to *Didone*. Besides this, he is engaged to compose two operas for our theatre, next year. You will certainly hear of him from other quarters ; but I wish you to know my opinion of him. It appears to me, as if *he wished to be heard in Spain* ; if that should ever happen, I am certain he would do you honour. You will consider whether it will be expedient to engage him for one year or two. Besides the operas which he entirely new sets, he will make no difficulty of accommodating whatever old operas you please; and if you thought it more convenient that he should compose at home, and send you his productions, as was done by Leo, he will be equally ready to join issue with you. In short, he is made of a paste to which you may give whatever form you please. Make use of this information, which, however, *is no recommendation*, and requires no ostensible answer.

Adieu my dear Gemello ; I can write no more to day. Love me, and believe me  
obstinately yours,

Vienna, November 12, 1749.

v 3

The

The Licenza mentioned by Metastasio in this letter, is printed at the end of it, though not in his works. It is a kind of complimentary Epilogue to the Opera of Armida, performed before the king and queen of Spain, at the court of Madrid. The interlocutors are, Apollo, and the Muses. The God chides his daughters for trifling away their time in talking about Armida, while the virtues of their best friends, the Sovereigns of Manzanare, remain unsung.

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## LETTER IX.

TO FARINELLI.

You were so angry with the monastic residence, called a country seat, where you had caught your sore throat, when you wrote your last letter to me, that you neither named the year, day, nor place, in which it was written. God send the same thing may not happen in directing your next letter to me; as I may then expect it till the day of judgment, without its ever coming to my hands.

I am extremely impatient to hear, that your throat is in *prißnum*; and hope you will not

not retard the news, but relieve my mind from its solicitude on that account, as soon as possible. But my dear Gemello, though I own it to be a very troublesome complaint, and pity you sincerely; yet, to confess the truth, (under favour) it is but fair that *per quæ quis peccat, per hæc & puniatur*, that the peccant part should suffer. God knows how many sins the witchcraft of your throat has occasioned; therefore a little castigation of that part may not be amiss.

By to day's post, I have advice, that the chest of sinuff is arrived at *Trieste*. My nose is in the greatest impatience.

The wax-faced Tesi wishes to have a certain *Ranieri Collin* secretary to the Abate Vernaccini, recommended to you, and wants me to do the busines. It is sufficient that you acknowledge I have written to you about him; however, I am very little acquainted with him.

Count Nicolas Esterhasi, who will be our Ambassador at your court, calls himself your friend, and wishes me to send compliments to you in his name; and to say, among other things, that he is very impatient to embrace you.

If I had more room, I would send you a long Litany of salutations, but that not being the case, content yourself with those of the Countess d'Althan.

Vienna, December 3, 1749.

## L E T T E R X.

### TO THE SAME.

By working for you in verse, I shall have no time to-day, for writing to you in prose. Here is the poem you wished, with the supplement. I should have attempted this for none but my dear Gemello. The thing is not so easy as you imagine. It is not sufficient that an additional part should be good in itself, it should be so adapted as to fit the place, otherwise it is a wen upon a production that was conceived without it. Be that as it may, the business is done, and if well represented, may have an effect. I have not had time even to transcribe it. God knows whether you will be able to decipher my original sketch. With more leisure it might perhaps have been better; but, at present, you must content yourself, however deficient you may find it.\*

The

The pleasure I felt at your recovering from the terrible sore throat with which you were afflicted, made me swallow the pill without making faces. It is a great consolation to me to perceive, by your letter, the tranquil state of your mind; a proof that the machine is in order, which I wish indissoluble. I have made a good use of the information you gave me, concerning the flattering remembrance of your most gracious sovereign. I have spread it about the court, and it is talked of every where ! Good God ! why has not it been always the same !

The snuff is not yet arrived ; but according to the advice I have received, it cannot be far from Vienna. You shall be informed the instant I get scent of it.

I wish you joy of the music of Buranello, who, according to what I have heard, will be a good composer for violins, violoncellos, and for singers ; but a very bad workman for poets. He thinks as much about the words when he is setting them, as you of being elected Pope ; and if he did think of them, I am not sure he would do better. He abounds in ideas, though not always his own, nor well connected together. In short, he is not my Apostle. I speak with sincerity

cerity to my dear Gemello, but in public, I leave him in that state of credit in which he is held by those who judge with the ear, and not the understanding.

Vienna, December 27, 1749.

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This is a very severe censure of that spirited and fanciful composer, *Galuppi detta Buranello*. But though Buranello's Pegasus, in the year 1749, was wild and ungovernable, he lived long enough to break and bring him into order. This composer, in his younger days, wrote with a rapidity which allowed him little leisure for attending to words, or indeed to the strict rules of counterpoint; but continuing to compose upwards of thirty years after this period, he produced works both for the church and stage, which, in spite of the transient state of musical fame, will long be admired by true judges of the art. Galuppi died at Venice, 1782, at 85. See *Hist. Music*, vol iv.

END OF THE SIXTH SECTION.

## S E C T I O N VII.

HAVING presented the reader with all the letters which the poet wrote to his friend Farinelli during the year 1749, a retrospect must be taken of those to his other correspondents during the same year. And the first which has been hitherto unnoticed, is addressed to an author of an oratorio, to which a Bolognese printer had affixed the name of Metastasio.

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## L E T T E R I.

TO SIG. D. LUIGI LOCATELLI, AT GENOA.

THERE is no resentment, Sir, more just, than that which you seem to feel at finding yourself defrauded of the glory justly due to your own labours, nor undertaking more laudable, than that of reclaiming it. It is not only mine, but the common interest of every writer, to take an active part in your favour.

favour. I therefore am most ready to publish as often as you please, that I had no kind of share in the writing, or conception of the drama called *La Via della croce*, to which as you have been pleased to inform me, my name has been set by the Bolognese printer. I am so little to blame for this robbery, that having been totally ignorant of it till now, I am wholly exempt even from the complacence into which the mistake that does me honour, might have seduced me. I am, however, obliged to him who has thus procured me your friendship, though by an oblique road. And beg of you to furnish me with frequent occasions of meriting that honour, and to believe me to be, &c.

Vienna, March 20, 1749.

Metastasio, in sorting his papers many years after, found a copy of this letter; and in order to authenticate it, gave testimony on the back with his own hand, that it was genuine, signing it PIETRO METASTASIO.

Vienna, June 26, 1755.

The next letters, written in 1749, of which the notice has been hitherto postponed,

poned, in order to avoid breaking the chain of his correspondence with Farinelli, are the following.

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## LETTER II.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE, AT  
NAPLES.

I PERCEIVE, by your most respected letter of the 14th of July, that you regard the slow arrival at ratiocination among the people who reside within the Arctic Circle, as a disadvantage. But I, (begging your pardon) regard it as one of the greatest blessings which providence can grant to us poor mortals, and am unable to say what I would not give to be possessed of a superior degree of stupidity. Of what use is this perspicacious celerity of combination? Perhaps to foresee the future? Oh what vanity! In so many years painful experience, I have discovered, to my shame, that in reasoning upon the events of this world in the most accurate manner I was able, I have deduced the most false consequences. For so numerous and uncertain are the possible contingencies, that it is utterly impossible for the human

human mind to see them all : and one single circumstance omitted, in laying the foundation of our reasoning, ruins the whole edifice. You know that if a line deviates one single point from its parallel, it becomes more distant the further it is extended. Hence I seem much more inclined to laugh at the predictions deduced from the reasoning of our modern Aristotles, than at the dreams of the Abate Joachim (*b*) or the visions of Nostradamus (*i*).

A short apologue of a Greek poet, seemingly puerile, but of very serious use in reality, exhibits clearly to our view, both the fallacy and mischief of our reasoning faculty. And being very short, it may help to fill up the vacuity of this letter.

He says, that human souls, when condemned to animate our bodies, come forth from their tranquil habitation at a door which has a vase on each side ; in the one is

(*b*) A visionary Theologian of the twelfth century, whose reveries were condemned by subsequent councils.

(*i*) A celebrated Astrologer and Fortune-teller of the sixteenth century, whose wild predictions were not only believed by the credulous multitude, but sought and respected by most of the princes of his time. It was the younger brother of this Charlatan who wrote the lives of the ancient Provençal bards, published at Lyons, 1575.

continued

contained the sweet, and in the other the bitter, which renders life happy or miserable. The new traveller is obliged, by the laws of fate, to stop at going out, and taste of both these vases, without knowing their contents; but may drink much or little, just as he pleases. Now as all are possessed with a pestilent rage for divining by the force of reason, see what are the consequences.

The soul which stops first to taste of the sweet vase, conjectures that the contents of the other must be the same, and eager to double his pleasure, takes a greater gulp of the bitter, but finds himself deceived. The soul that stops first at the bitter vase, by the same false reasoning, supposing he shall diminish disgust, takes the smallest quantity possible of the sweet, and is equally deceived. Hence it is, says the poet, that in the whole course of our lives, the sweet is so much less than the bitter (*k*).

But should the reasoning faculty be granted to human pride, if the power of directing the course of events is not likewise granted, it would be of no other use than to make us wretched. No axiom is more demonstrable

(*k*) See Homer's Ilijad, Book xxiv.

than that in this valley of tears our pains are far more numerous than our pleasures. And that our imaginary evils are infinitely more terrible than the real. A poet with whom I have some slight acquaintance, among his papers, not yet published, illustrates the truth of this sentiment, in the following manner.

*Sempre e maggior del vero  
L'Idea della fventura,  
Al credulo pensiero  
Depinta dal timor  
Chi fista il mal figura  
Affretta il proprio affanno,  
Ed affcura un danno.  
Quando e' dubbio ancor (I).*

Ideal evil, when design'd,  
And colour'd by the artifit fear,  
Can more than real, rack mankind,  
And gen'rate sufferings more severe.

Mortals who fancied woes explore  
Misfortune but anticipate,  
And render certain, what before  
Was doubtful and unfixt by fate.

And if your excellency tells me, that by foreseeing misfortunes, and making a good use of free-will, we may avoid them ; I shall answer, that this power is limited to our own

(I) *Attilio Regolo*, atto 1<sup>o</sup>m. sc. 11. not published when this letter was written.

little frames, and does not extend beyond them. Whatever free-agency I may boast, it is not in my power to prevent the ruin of a kingdom which I may wish prosperous, the disgrace of a friend whom I may wish happy, or the infidelity of a nymph whom I should wish to be constant. So that after the most subtle arguments, reasoning, combinations, and systems; after having extracted from the brain, the memory of things past; after totally forgetting the present in pursuing the future, we at length, in spite of the ridiculous privilege of tormenting ourselves, find that we are plunged into the same inconvenience in which we should have been, if we had remained quiet, and let things take their course. What then remains for us, but to have recourse to that enviable indolence which is produced by stoical arrogance? And what, except the Syllogisms of Seneca and Epictetus, have these fortunate people to support them in their placid apathy?—Softly, softly, good Sig. Abate, you gallop without a bridle; your argument proves too much, and precipitates you into absurdity without your perceiving it. For, according to you, the life of an oyster or a tortoise would be infinitely

preferable to ours.—I beg my life at your Excellency's fair hands. You destroy my arguments without mercy. If I should for a moment, lose my hold, you would draw me into heresy whether I would or no. Let us go on fair and softly. In the first place, I wish you to be convinced, that I have never forgot the disadvantage the tortoise and oyster lie under, from not having been baptized, and that this misfortune alone renders all these advantages unworthy of the least consideration. In the next place, I must beg of you to remember, that our dispute is not whether brutes are more happy than reasonable creatures, but whether those of the last mentioned class are most happy who think but little, or those who think too much. Therefore I must beg of your Excellency not to turn the tables upon me, unfairly; and I shall own that this absurdity has not appeared equally strong in all, particularly among those who had the disgrace to be born before the Temple of Janus was shut by Octavius Augustus; for then it would not have been difficult to prove, that the tranquil stupidity of an oyster or tortoise would be preferable to the tormenting vivacity of Pythagoras or Plato. But I shall not

peremptorily assert this from my own imagination, but give you chapter and verse.

A celebrated Florentine writer, called Giovanni Battista Gelli, who did great honour to his country two centuries ago, printed annals of the court of Circe, which are very much to our purpose. This illustrious investigator of remote antiquity, relates, that Ulysses, after the destruction of Troy, having remained sometime at the court of Circe, both as her lover and her prisoner; in spite of all the allurements of that enchanting abode, could not refrain from perpetually meditating his escape to his little kingdom of Ithaca, in a miserable Island of the Ionia Sea, but to which he was extremely partial from its being his native country; and finding from the caution and vigilance of his jealous guardian, that all his wiles and stratagems were vainly practised in trying to procure his liberty, he determined to vanquish her by open force. But while he was waiting for a favourable opportunity to put this design in execution, I know not in what circumstances it happened, but he one day so well availed himself of moments of excessive tenderness, that the fond enchantress unable to resist him, promised by

one of those oaths so terrible to the gods of Homer, to grant him leave of absence for a limited time ; and the artful Ulysses taking advantage of her weakness, while off her guard, pushed his victory so far as to ask permission to take with him into Greece at least two of his numerous companions, who being transformed into brutes of various kinds wandered about the country ; and not only two were conceded to him, but all those who were willing to follow him and resume the human form. The subtle Greek certain that nothing would be denied to him, went on requesting that the lost faculty of speech should be restored to his companions, that he might explain to them her proposition, and obtained it. Oh how fertile, for our disgrace, did that scandalous example become of allowing brutes to speak ! But we shall not interrupt our narrative with reflections. Ulysses continues the Author, proud of his triumph, and more than certain of not leaving one of his companions with the enchantress, impatient to perfect his great work, tore himself as soon as possible from her arms. The first he happened to meet with, in quitting the enchanted palace, was one of those elegant animals so

unjustly abhorred by the elect people, whose chief delight was to wallow in the mire, neither asleep nor awake.

Ulysses ~~in~~ spying him at a distance, called out to him, and enquired whether he was one of his companions. He slowly lifted up his snout, but not at the first sound of the voice, and as if impatient to get rid of importunity, in a most dry Spartan style, articulated, or rather grunted, in no very distinct manner, his name and country.

Oh my dear friend, exclaimed Ulysses, ~~in~~ discovering who he was, return thanks to the Gods : thy miseries are at an end, to day we shall both set sail together for Greece. What ! why must we set sail ? cries the frightened brute ; to whom Ulysses briefly discovered the favour he had obtained from Circe for himself and for some of his companions who were willing to follow him. The transformed Greek, comforted to hear that the going or staying depended upon his own choice, civilly wished his leader a good voyage. But he, not believing that his countryman was in earnest, asked him if he joked ? I should joke indeed, cries the other, if I said that I consented to return with thee ; and canst thou believe Ulysses, that I would

voluntarily abandon so sweet and tranquil  
 an abode, and the peaceful company of my  
 innocent peers, to plunge myself a-new into  
 the wretchedness of humanity, in order to  
 live constantly in fear of such cunning and  
 mischievous beings as thyself? Try to de-  
 ceive somebody else, I am not such a fool,  
 Then rolling on the other side, politely  
 turned his back on the destroyer of Troy,  
 and without honouring him with any other  
 answer, left him to prate at his leisure.  
 Figure to yourself the surprise and fury of  
 Ulysses; he poured on him a torrent of the  
 most eloquent abuse, not omitting one of  
 Aristophanes's licentious expressions, nor did  
 he discontinue railing, but to propose the  
 voyage in vain to a bear, whose curiosity  
 was excited by the noise of the debate. Not  
 discouraged by this second failure, his third  
 trial was upon a horse, and his fourth upon  
 a stag, but with no better success. In short,  
 to abridge our legend, after having in vain  
 traversed over and over again the whole  
 neighbourhood; after having finished his  
 speech with more art and vigour than that  
 which he made when he had clandestinely  
 possessed himself of the arms of Achilles,  
 hoarse, breathless, fatigued, and enraged,  
 he

he at length returned to Circe, without having prevailed on any among all his companions to return with him, except one, and that was an elephant.

Now what will your Excellency say to this fine fragment of history? It is no poetical fiction, as you may perhaps suppose. The proofs of ancient monuments are indisputable. It is an authentic volume of the Memoirs of Circe, excavated in digging at the foot of the Circean mountain; and, besides the medals and citations which the Marquis Maffei will soon publish, we shall ere long have the fact amply detailed and communicated in Tuscan characters. Hence the narrative is most certain.

What seems to me still more certain, my dear Abate, you will say, is, that you are a most tiresome creature, and fit only to prate with silly women. Oh that is but too true, and I plead guilty. The worst is, that this new inclination for gossiping is one of the many painful symptoms, which convince me that I grow old. I ought certainly to correct myself to-day, and throw this letter into the fire instead of sending it to the post. But on reflection, it appears to me, that if I am culpable, your Excellency is not quite

innocent. The excessive praises bestowed by you upon my former letters, have not a little contributed to the length of this; therefore receive it as a slight, but just punishment, for the little charity with which you have inflamed the vanity of a poor poet. To-night will be represented, in this theatre, for the first time, *Acbilles in Sciros*. The music of Jomelli, at the rehearsal, has far exceeded the great expectations that were formed of it.

Vienna, August 30, 1749.

### L E T T E R III.

#### TO THE SAME PRINCESS.

YOUR most respected letter of Sept. 22d, found me in Moravia, where, with a military air, I ramble about, exercising the patience of the hares and pheasants, of which the abundance will not indeed be much diminished by my dexterity; they being much more frightened than hurt by me (*m*). We

(*m*) A noble Peer, who is still living, after firing at a Norfolk covey of eight or ten brace of partridges, on seeing none fall, used to cry out: "yes, you may go, but you *have* it."

*have*

have hitherto had the most smiling season, both here and in the rest of Germany, that can be imagined; but within these four days, the Teutonic winter has unexpectedly appeared with all his magnificent train, and without the least precursor to announce his arrival. All is covered with snow. The rivers as well as lakes were instantly frozen in a most solid manner; and the cold blown from the seven neighbouring hills, is so subtle and penetrating, that we cannot exclude it from our warmest apartments. But notwithstanding all this unforeseen and violent change of nature, I still find much amusement here, having been more formed for Arcadian tranquillity than the bustle and magnificence of courts. I am pleased with the silent concord of all existence; the roving about in search of well-known paths, fields, bushes, pastoral bowers, and every known object of which, though the fall of snow has changed the colouring, yet the design is still respectfully preserved. I reflect, with sentiments of gratitude, that the friendly forest which, by its shade, but lately defended me from the burning rays of the sun, now affords me materials for combating the extreme fury of the season. I laugh at winter with all its horrors,

which

which I see without feeling ; having it in our power to compose an artificial spring in our apartments at pleasure ; but by an impulse of self-love, what pleases me most, is the finding out that, compared with other seasons, winter has still its conveniences, beauties, and advantages.

In returning to Vienna, which will be very soon, I shall take by the hand my poetics, in order to see whether I had left them in a state fit to be seen, or whether I must have recourse to new carefes.

Jollowitz, Oct. 23, 1749.

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In the summer of this year, before he quitted Vienna in order to visit the Countess D'Althan, at her country seat in Moravia, Metastasio received a letter from the admirable Hasse, the composer, requesting his instructions in setting to music his opera of *Attilio Regolo*, for the court of Dresden (n). And his Answer may serve as a useful lesson to future composers of this drama, and in-

(n) This was the opera that was written in 1740, for the Emperor Charles VI's. birth-day ; but that Prince dying before it was brought on the stage, no use was made of it, till the period mentioned in the following letter,

deed

deed furnish many valuable hints to composers of operas in general.

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#### L E T T E R IV.

To SIG. ADOLFO HASSE, the celebrated Professor of Music, *detto il Saffone* (called the Saxon), concerning the Opera of ATTILIO REGOLO.

My dear Monsieur Hafse has never been absent from my heart since I quitted Vienna; but, hitherto, I have not been able to devote myself to your service, because in this most idle bustle I am hardly my own master when I sleep. So fully am I engaged in walking, shooting, music, cards, and conversation, that not a moment remains for private meditation, without defrauding society. Yet, in spite of all these impediments, I am penetrated with such remorse for having so long neglected you, that I am now determined to obey your commands. But what can I possibly suggest to you, which has not already occurred to your own mind? After so many illustrious proofs of knowledge, judgment, grace, expression, invention,

vention, and ingenuity, with which you only have been able to dispute the palm of harmonic primacy with our nation : after having breathed with your seducing notes into so many poetical compositions that life and soul which the authors themselves were unable to furnish or imagine, what light, advertisement, or instruction, can you expect me to furnish ? If I were only to mention things with which you are *not* acquainted, my letter would already be finished ; but if you wish me to converse with you, God knows when I should have done.

And now, as *Attilio Regolo* is to be the subject of my letter, I shall begin by developing the characters, which, perhaps, are not expressed in so lively a manner in the piece, as I had conceived them in my mind.

In *Regulus*, it has been my intention to delineate the character of a Roman hero of consummate virtue, according to the Pagan idea, not only in principle, but practice ; whose fortitude has been long tried, and is proof against every caprice of fortune. A rigid and scrupulous observer, as well of justice and probity, as of the laws and customs which time and the great authority of his

his ancestors have rendered sacred to his country. Sensible to all the gentler passions of humanity, but superior to each. A great commander, good citizen, and an affectionate father; but never considering these characters as distinct from his country, or otherwise among the blessings or evils of life, than as they eventually contribute to the welfare or injury to that whole of which he considered himself as a part. A great friend to glory, but regarding it merely as a reward to which individuals should aspire, by sacrificing their own interest and happiness to public utility.

With these internal qualities, I attribute to my prototype a majestic exterior, without pomp; reflecting, but serene; authoritative, but humane; equal, considerate, and composed. I should not like that his voice or gestures should be violent, except in two or three situations of the opera, in which a sensible deviation from the constant tenor of his subsequent conduct, would exalt his ruling passions, which are patriotism and glory. You must not be alarmed, my dear Sir, I shall be much shorter in the description of the other characters.

In

In the personage of the Consul, *Manlius*, I have tried to represent one of those great men, who, in the midst of every civil and military virtue, suffer themselves to be carried away by the rage of emulation, beyond all warrantable bounds. I wish this rivalry to be strongly marked, as well as his hostile disposition of mind towards Regulus. These will appear in the first scene with *Attilia*, as well as in the beginning of the next, in which the Senate hears Regulus, and the Carthaginian Ambassadors. His subsequent change of sentiment into respect and tenderness for Regulus, will render his character more admirable, and more pleasing; it will exalt the virtue of Regulus, by demonstrating its efficacy in producing such stupendous effects, and will add to the second scene of the second act, which is that for which I feel the greatest partiality.. The characteristic of *Manlius* is a natural propensity to emulation, which when he discovers, he corrects, but does not relinquish.

*Publius* is the young lion that promises all the force of the fire, but is not yet furnished with tusks and claws; and it may easily be conjectured through his impetuosity, passion,

passion, and the inexperience of youth, what he will be, when arrived at maturity.

*Lycinius* is a pleasing young man, valiant and resolute, but extremely impassioned. Hence it is very difficult to convince him of the necessity of sacrificing the genius of his wife, and even the life of his benefactor to glory, and the service of his country.

*Amilcar* is an African, not accustomed to the maxims of probity and justice, which the Romans, at this time, professed, and much less to their practice: hence, from the beginning, he remains in astonishment, being unable to comprehend a way of thinking so diametrically opposite to that of his country. He is, however, ambitious of imitating what he sees; but, for want of moderation, goes awkwardly to work. However, during his short residence at Rome, if he did not acquire the Roman virtue, he at least learned to envy those who possessed it.

The ruling passion of *Attilia* is tenderness and veneration for her father, whom she not only prefers to Rome itself, but to her lover. Convinced by authority and example, she, at length, adopts her father's sentiments, but in the trial of that fortitude, which

which she wished to imitate, she manifestly sinks under the weakness of her sex. In *Barces*, I figured to myself a pleasing, beautiful and lively African. Her temperament, like that of her nation, is amourous, and her tenderness for Amilcar extreme. In him, all her hopes, her fears, thoughts and cares, are centered. She is even more attached to her lover than the manners of her country ; and is not only more indifferent than him about the Roman passion for glory, but thanks the Gods for having preserved her from its contagion.

These are the general outlines of the portraits I meant to draw ; but you know that the pencil is not always faithful to the traces of the mind. It therefore depends upon you, who are not only an excellent artist, but a perfect friend to clothe my personages in so masterly a manner, that if their features should not strike, they may be recognized, at least, by their dress and ornaments.

And now, to come to particulars, according to your desire, I shall speak of the Recitatives, some of which I should wish to be animated by Instruments ; but in pointing them out I do not pretend to limit your ideas :

ideas : where mine meet your wishes, adopt them ; but where we disagree, I beg of you not to change your opinion, in mere complacency.

In the first act, I find two situations in which instruments may assist me. The first is the whole harangue of Attilio to Manlius, in the second scene, beginning

*A che vengo ! Ab fino a quando.*

Wherefore do I come ! When, ah tell me when.

After the words *A che vengo*, the instruments should begin to be heard; and, afterwards, sometimes silent, sometimes accompanying the voice, and sometimes by reinforcing, to give energy and fire to an oration in itself violent ; and I should like this accompaniment to continue to the end of the verse

*La barbaro or qual è, Cartago, o Roma ?*

Now which is the barbarian, Carthage, or Rome ?

But I believe that it will be necessary, particularly in this scene, to avoid the inconvenience of making the singer wait for the chord ; otherwise all the heat and energy of the speech would be chilled, and the instruments, instead of animating, would

enervate the recitative, and render the picture disjointed, obscure, and suffocated in the frame. So that it seems here, as if all *ritornelli*, or interstitial symphonies, should be avoided.

The other situation is in the seventh scene of the same act; and is precisely one of those little places in which I should wish Regulus to quit his moderation, and think more of himself than usual. There are only twelve verses that I should wish to have accompanied; which begin at :

*To venisti a tradirvi - - - -*

Through fear I should betray you - - - -

and end with :

*Come al nome di Roma Africa tremi.*

How Africa trembles at the name of Rome.

If you should think accompaniment necessary here, I recommend the same œconomy of time as before; that the actor may not be embarrassed or obliged to wait, by which that fire would be diminished, which I wish to have increased.

And now we are speaking of the seventh scene of the first act, if you have no objection, I should wish to have a very short symphony

symphony after this verse of Manlius,  
*Tacbeta: ei viene* \*, to give time for the Consul and Senators to take their places, and to allow Regulus leisure for advancing slowly, and in a pensive manner. The character of the symphony should be majestic, slow, and sometimes interrupted; expressing as it were the state of Regulus's mind, in reflecting upon his now entering that place as a slave, in which he formerly presided as consul. I should like, that during one of these breaks in the symphony, Amilcar should come in to speak; when, during the silence of the instruments, he should pronounce these verses:

*Regola a che t'arresti? E forse nuovo  
Per te que'lo Seggiorne?*

Why dost thou stop, O Regulus? Is it from thy being unaccustomed to this assembly?

And the symphony should not be concluded, till after Regulus's answer:

*Penso qual ne partii, qual vi ritorno.*

I think of what I was, and what I return.

But after these words, I should not wish the instruments to perform any thing more than a mere close.

\* Silence: He comes.

In the second act, there seems to me no other recitative which requires accompaniment, than the soliloquy of Regulus, which begins thus, sc. 7th.

*Tu palpiti, o mio Cor ! - - -*

*Thou tremblest, O my heart ! - - -*

This ought to be recited sitting, till after the following words :

— *Ab no. Dè vili*

*Questo è il linguaggio.*

Ah no ! this is the language of slaves.

The rest to be performed standing ; for as the exit of Regulus happens at the change of scene, it would be difficult if he were sitting. But in order that he may have time and space to move about slowly, stopping from time to time, and manifesting himself to be immersed in thought, it is necessary that the instruments should introduce, assist, and second, his reflections. While the actor is sitting, as his reflections consist of doubts and suspensions, they will afford an opportunity for extraneous modulation, and short *ritornelli* for the instruments ; but the instant he rises, the rest of the scene requires

resolution and energy: so that I recur to my former wish, for œconomy of time.

And now we are speaking of this scene, I must beg of you to correct the original, which I transmitted in the following manner. There is a meaning implied, which upon reflection seems to want clearness in the expression.

— *Ab no! Dè vili  
Questo è il linguaggio. Inutilmente nacque  
Chi sol vive a se stesso: e sol da questo  
Nobili affetto ad obbligar s'impars  
Se per altrui. Quanto a di ben la terra,  
Alla gloria si dee.*

Ah no! this is the language of the worthless. He is born to no purpose who lives but for himself. It is only from this noble affection of forgetting ourselves, that we learn to be useful to others. Whatever the world can bestow that is most valuable, is due to glory.

Though there are places in the third act, as well as in the other two, which I may have neglected to mention, where violins may be opportunely employed; yet I must observe, that this ornament should not be rendered too familiar; and I should be glad, if in this third act, particularly, no accom-

panied recitative occurred, till the *last scene*. This is prevented by the noise and tumult of the people, who cry out, *Regolo resta*, "stay with us Regulus." The noise of these cries ought to be great, to imitate reality, and to manifest what a respectful silence the mere presence of Regulus could obtain, from a whole tumultuous people. The instruments should be silent when the other personages speak; and, if you approve of it, may be employed whenever the Prototype speaks in the *last scene*; varying, however, the movement and modulation, not merely to express and enforce the words or sentiments, as is thought a great merit by other composers, but to paint also the situation of mind of him who pronounces these words and sentiments, at which such masters as you always aspire. For you know, as well as I, that the same words and sentiments may be uttered, according to the diversity of situation, in such a manner as to express either joy, sorrow, anger, or pity. I should hope from such hands as yours, that a recitative always accompanied by instruments, would not be such a tiresome thing as it usually is, from others. In the first place, because you will preserve that œconomy of time which I  
have

have so much recommended; particularly, as you likewise so well know how to perfect the art, by the judicious and alternate use of *pianos* and *fortes*, by *rinforzandos*, by *staccatos*, *slurs*, accelerating and retarding the measure, *arpeggios*, shakes, *softenutos*, and above all, by new modulation, of which you alone seem to know the whole *arcana* (o). But if, in despight of so many subsidies, you should be of a different opinion, I shall readily give way to your experience, and be perfectly contented, if the following verses are accompanied by violins; that is, the first ten, from :

*Regoli regli ! Ed io l'ascolto ! Ed io  
Stay Regulus ! And do I hear this ! Can I ---*

To the verse :

*Meritai l'odio vostro ?  
How have I deserved your hatred ?*

Then from the verse :

*No : impossibile non è. De' miei Romani  
No: 'tis impossible. Of my Romans*

To :

*Eforto cittadin : Padre comando.  
I exhort you as a citizen: as a Father, I command.*

(o) These technical terms, and the refinements they express, were but little known, at least in England, forty years ago.

and lastly from

*Romani, addio. Siano i congedi estremi  
to the end (p).*

(p) This being the celebrated piece of Recitative, which, as set by Jomelli, was constantly encored when performed in England, by Serafini, in 1754. I shall give it here entire, with a literal translation.

<i>Romani, addio. Siano i congedi estremi</i>	Romans, adieu. Let this our last farewell
<i>Degni di noi. Lode agli Dei, vi lascio,</i>	Be worthy of us all. Thank heaven I leave you,
<i>E vi lascio Romani. Ab conservate</i>	And leave you Romans. Ah strive to keep
<i>Illibato il gran nome: e voi farete</i>	Unfulfilled that great name; and you will be
<i>Gli arbitri della terra; e il mondo intero</i>	The Earth's sole arbiters. All human kind
<i>Roman diventerà. Numi custodi</i>	Will Roman soon become. Ye guardian pow'rs
<i>Di quest' almo terren; Dee protettrici</i>	Of this blest land! Divinities who watch
<i>Delia finse d'Enea, confido a voi</i>	Oe'r great Æneas' sons! to you I trust
<i>Questo popol d'Eroi: fian vostra cura</i>	This race of heros; O protect with care
<i>Questo suol, queste testi, e queste mura.</i>	This fostering soil, these mansions, and these walls.
<i>Fate che sempre in esse</i>	May constancy, and fortitude,
<i>La costanza, la fè, la gloria alberghi,</i>	With valour, justice, glory, and good faith,
<i>La giustitia, il valore. E, se giammai</i>	Fix here their sacred dwelling, and if
<i>Minaccia il Campidoglio</i>	Some evil and malignant star
<i>Alcu' astro maligno influssi rei,</i>	With influence dire the Capitol thou'd threat,
<i>Ecco Regolo, O Dei: Regolo solo</i>	Behold eternal Gods, your Regulus;
<i>Sia la vittima vostra; e sì consumi</i>	Let him your victim be, and, on his head
<i>Tutta l'ira del ciel sul capo mio:</i>	Let all the wrath of heav'n be spent. But ah!
<i>Ma Roma illa - - - Ab qui si piange!</i>	Let Rome unburt, remain - - - here—here
<i>Addio.</i>	I feel myself unman'd! - - - Adieu!

You

You imagine now, I suppose, that this tiresome discussion is over. No, Sir, we have still a short addendum to tack to it. I should wish that the last chorus were one of that kind, with which you have excited in the audience a desire of hearing it, unknown before; and that there should be such a stamp set on the *addio*, with which the Romans take a final leave of Regulus, as shall demonstrate, that this Chorus is not like most others, a superfluity, but a most essential part of the catastrophe.

I here quit the subject, not indeed, for want of materials, or will to converse with you longer; but because I am really tired myself, and fearful of tiring you.

Signor Annibali, is desirous that I should write something to him, concerning his part (*a*). But I must entreat you to read to him such passages of this letter, as you may think likely to afford him any satisfaction. I have not time to peruse what I have written; think then, whether it is possible for me to transcribe any part of it.

(*a*) Annibali, whose voice was a *contralto*, and who performed the part of Attilio, was in England, and sung in Handel's Operas, at Covent Garden, in 1736-&7. See his Character, *History of Music*, vol. iv. p. 398. 402.

Precnt

Present a thousand affectionate compliments in my name, to the incomparable Signora Faustina, and believe me, upon all occasions, yours most truly (*b*).

Vienna, 1749.

## L E T T E R    V.

### TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I SHOULD rejoice, without bounds, at your happy arrival in your native country, if in the letter which you have been pleased to write to me on the subject, there transpired the least sign that you would rejoice yourself. I wish I may be mistaken in my conjectures; but it is certain, that in your Laconic epistle, there does not appear the

(*b*) Regarding these memoirs as a kind of supplement to my *General History of Music*, I have inserted a translation of this letter, at full length, however long and technical it may appear to some of my readers: as I cannot help regarding the instructions of such a Poet, to such a Musician, as precious relics, not only worthy of preservation, but of being contemplated with reverence, by young Opera composers, ambitious not only to embellish, but enforce the imagery and sentiments of the Poetry which they have to cloath with melody and harmony.

smallest

smallest spark of that content which usually inflames a mind, *voti compos.* I wish you may enjoy that tranquility which you propose to yourself, and wish it from my heart; would to God you may discover the unknown source of happiness.

My *Attilio Regolo* is preparing for the Theatre Royal at Dresden, with all convenient dispatch. Annibali writes me word, that the music of the two first acts, has already been rehearsed before their Majesties, and is most excellent. I wish, as you may imagine, that its success may answer expectation; but of this, you will certainly have a more sincere account than myself; however, if it should fail, there is no likelihood that rumour will be silent. It is long since my tranquility was at the mercy of popular breath. The public may determine how they please on the present occasion; neither the excess nor want of approbation, will surprise me. I am too well convinced, that these rather depend on the fortuitous concourse of a thousand secret and minute accidents, than on the apparent motives to which they are ascribed.

Vienna, Dec. 27th, 1749.

L E T.

## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME, AT SIENNA.

YOUR letter of the 19th of January, changed the pleasure which I constantly used to receive from your correspondence, into bitterness, at your complaints of the accomplishment of my prediction concerning your migration into Tuscany. Good God ! have you then read, thought, and perhaps written, so much in vain about happiness being the more difficult to attain, in proportion to the eagerness with which it is pursued ! and have you then suffered your imagination to run away with you, so far as to think you shall come to beggary ? Oh, but say you, I was not in earnest, and our old masters tell you that *turpe est dicere non putabam* : and, particularly, when before you took this step, your friends with zeal hastened to your assistance, as you well know, upon the first rumour, and did every thing in their power to enlighten you ; they tried to hold you by the sleeve, but you tore yourself from their hold. So true it is, that wise maxims

maxims can never enable the mind to resist the emotions of the heart, when, thanks to daily practice, they are mechanically converted into habits. For our disgrace, the trade of a poet consists more in saying what is right, than ~~in~~ practising it. But all this fine homily is already out of season : consider it merely as a transport of grief, I should please you more, if I were less interested in your welfare. You regard me as Moliere's old man, who disturbed at the news of his son's captivity, cries out every moment, *but what the devil had he to do on ship-board?* You ask my help ; but when you have obtained all that I can give, it will amount to but little. Yet, however convinced I may be of my debility, I shall not remain with my hands in my bosom, but shall try, at least, to stimulate those who have more strength to help you on. I must confess, however, that I should have had much more courage, if I were able to draw water from the source : there it is limpid and open, qualities which it does not preserve in its canals.

That the Princess Royal occupies herself in translating my *Attilio*, is still a secret to me. She has, however, communicated to me many of her poetical productions, and without

out adulation, I declare, that I am always more and more surprised to find, that in spite of the delicacy of sex, and the weighty affairs incident to her rank, she has been able to mount so high on Parnassus.

All the letters from Dresden confirm the fortune of *Attilio*. But the most flattering of all proofs, is the approbation of the King, who knows a great part of it by heart; a circumstance of which he did not wish me to remain ignorant. He has deigned to have it insinuated to me, that he should have been highly pleased, if I could have been present at any one of the representations; and in spite of the impertinence of my nerves, and of the uncommonly horrid winter which this perverse year has produced, I should have given way to such an excusable vanity, if the whole medical faculty, and the outcries of my friends, had not prevented me. This, my dear Abaté, is the most illustrious premium that I can propose to my labours, the rest is more an affair of others, than my own.

The Neapolitan Envoy at Dresden, loads me with a mercantile care, little adapted to my profession. He never had written to me before; but now writes only on this subject, and

and is determined that I shall have enough of it, for he speaks of nothing else. This confidence does not more surprise, than honour me. You, according to him, are to speak to me on the same chapter. Oh poor humanity! Adieu, believe me without exaggeration, yours most sincerely.

Vienna, February 7, 1750.

## L E T T E R VII.

### TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

I feel more pain than remorse at not having been able to answer your letter of the 25th of April, sooner. My health, some domestic affairs, a world of commissions for other people, and different maledictions, have physically prevented me from being with you, but not at all from thinking of you. I have frequently spoken of your affairs to Count Losi, and have always found him full of benevolence towards you. It would not be amiss, if you were to join in teasing him, by thanking him for the partiality towards you which he has repeatedly mentioned to me; describing to him in the shortest manner possible, the true state of your

affairs; and magnifying the hope you place in his kind offices.

I read with pleasure the Canzonetta of Signora Livia Accarigi. It is poetical, happy, graceful, and harmonious: and coming from a lady, is, in short, more than sufficient to disgrace our whole sex. You may safely and conscientiously congratulate her upon it in my name. I know not whether our august patron has yet seen it; but I know that I have laid such a train, that he certainly will see it.

Vienna, June 6, 1750.

END OF THE SEVENTH SECTION.

S E C-

## SECTION VIII.

WE shall now resume the correspondence of our poet with his friend Farinelli, which seems to have been the most cordial and constant literary intercourse he sustained after the death of the Romanini. In a former letter to him that has been inserted in these memoirs (c), Metastasio speaks of his *natural* impatience for the arrival of a present of snuff, which had been sent to him from Spain by the vocal favourite of that court; and now he gives an account of its being in his possession.

## LETTER I.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

NOTWITHSTANDING a croud of letters that lie before me, and which will remain

(c) See above, p. 295.

in peace, till the tortured nerves of my poor head will allow me to answer them, I cannot postpone embracing you, and giving you an account of the snuff being arrived, and in my possession, together with the vanillà, and bark. I received the chest two days ago, proud of ever having had a share in the Spanish Flota. It is impossible to thank you in a more expressive formula, than in saying aloud, that the gift is worthy of your heart. The whole city and court are already informed of it; and I take especial care, that justice is done to my most beloved twin. The bark and snuff, are arrived in the highest preservation. The vanilla is a little dry, and, in some of the extremities, it has contracted a kind of rust, or mouldiness, which made me fear it was spoiled. But the learned in such matters have cleaned it, and say that it will be still useful. I should enter upon a long and formal acknowledgement, but we know one another too well: you would skip like a grasshopper; and I should not say half what I feel. You who are in my heart, or rather who have it with you, ask it how it feels.

Last week I sent you the drama of the *Cinefs*, with the additional part you desired.

If the passage which you proposed by a merchant ship, is as short as it ought to be, you will have it twenty-three, or twenty-four days, before Easter. But if not, the fault will be your correspondent's, not mine. The present letter will go through Paris directly to Madrid. Observe, when you receive it, the difference of time that it has been on the road, from that of former letters.

Mareschal Count Pinos has been here, to thank me for the partiality which you have shewn to his nephew. He is impatient to obey your commands in something or other, and extremely sorry that the busines of Sig. Rodolfo is absolutely impracticable. He entreats you to put him to some other trial; and, in the mean time, if it should be convenient and desirable for his son to try his fortune, and enter into his service, he will give him a company in his own regiment.

Our Countess d'Althan thanks you for the favourable notice you have taken of her nephew; is much pleased with your remembrance; and having divided with her my snuff, it will constantly stimulate gratitude, at least in the nasal sense.

By your silence concerning several of my letters, I begin to apprehend that they are

lost. Your last is dated the 28th of November.

Whenever an opportunity offers, I beg you will never fail to lay at the feet of your Deity, the most humble tributes of my profound respect: and say, that authorised by such an oracle, my vanity begins to become a virtue. Adieu my dear Gemello. Thanks again, and—No, no; you begin to bounce. Love me as I do you, and I desire no more.

Vienna, 3d of 1750 (<sup>a</sup>).

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In the next letter to his old and zealous friend, he resumes the unfortunate subject of his Neapolitan place; and speaks of the prosecutions of fortune, in spite of all the favour and partiality of the four principal sovereigns in Europe, with equal energy and indignation. And it does seem, as if princes were more negligent, or less able than is generally imagined, to reward such captivating talents as Metastasio's, even at the time when they were most enchanted by them, and when they most openly con-

(a) In none of Metastasio's Letters, written during the first month of the year, is January mentioned.

fessed

fesled their obligations. That no one of these princes would encourage the seizure of a purchased place, in order to reward his merit at another's expence, was a virtuous forbearance ; but that no one of them, or that all together, would not indemnify the poet's loss by an adequate pension, is a most marvellous instance of the inefficacy of royal favour !

## LETTER II.

TO FARINELLI.

ALL the newspapers are full of the royal magnificence with which you have brought out my *Demofonte*. In short Madrid, thanks to your care, occupies the first place among all the theatres in Europe. And this will always happen, where princes have good noses, and can distinguish a melon from a pumpkin ; in short, when they do not order the shoe-maker to do the business of a barber ; or the barber to make boots. All this theatrical primacy on the banks of the Manzanare, except the sovereign support, is your work : and whatever does you honour, sweetly excites my twin tenderneſs.

You may easily imagine whether I am flattered or not, by the generous nation in which you reside, honouring me with the title of the great Spanish poet : I should be pleased if I were a hermit in a desert, or a mummy baked into a monk of La Trappe; consider then to what degree I must be intoxicated, being a poet, and living in a court. But the venerated oracle pronounced in my favour, by the first star of this firmament, is so great and so enviable a premium for my poor labours, that I forget their inefficacy in procuring me some little favour from my enemy fortune. I begin to wish that some author would take it into his head to write my life, and without the least deviation from truth, would begin thus: *In the eighteenth century, lived a certain Abate Metastasio, a tolerable poet among bad ones: neither handsome nor ugly; more full of wants than avarice; with the fair-sex tender, but respectful; faithful to his friends, though useless; endowed with a desire to do good, but devoid of the means.* He laboured during his whole life, at once to instruct and delight mankind; but fortune was always so much his foe, that in spite of the rectitude, pity, and grandeur, of the most just sovereigns in Europe, he had been deprived,

*deprived, without a crime, of the miserable reward of his innumerable labours, and the means of securing the least provision for old age; but notwithstanding so many misfortunes, he died proud, and contented; in remembering that one of the greatest, most enlightened, and most amiable princesses upon earth, had preferred him to all the poets who flourished during the age in which he lived.*

Jomelli is the best composer, of whom I have any knowledge, for words. Be assured that I have no partiality for him. It is true, that he repeats too much; but it is the present epidemical vice of Italy, of which he will soon be corrected. He has sometimes restrained the caprice and ambition of singers. But there are no Farnellis, to whose taste and judgment a poet may safely resign himself.

A company of ladies, enlisted under the banner of the Countess d'Althan, will have me speak of them, and tell you how much they love you, in spite of the mischief which you have done them, in rendering your imitators intolerable. But this would be a long business; and I have hardly time to mention the affection with which I am, &c.

To relieve you from the tiresomeness of this letter, I send you a *Canzonetta* on the departure of *Nifa*. You will find it very tender, but do not wrong me so far as to suppose me in love. You know whether I am capable of such imbecility. The music is common, and my own; but whoever sings it with a little expression, will find it sufficient to vanquish a *Nifa*. A better composition would acquire more applause to the musician, but fewer advantages to the lover.

Vienna, January 28, 1750.

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A letter which he wrote to the Princess of Belmonte, with his beautiful Canzonet, *La Partenza*, dated Feb. 21, 1750, has been preserved in the family, and the following transcript of it has been inserted in the memoirs of the poet, by Sig. Mattei.

" I am so pleased and flattered by the correspondence with which your excellency deigns to continue to honour me, that the slightest pretext for *keeping it alive*, seems to me a most weighty reason for writing. The excuse for the present letter, will be the inclosed canzonet, which makes me begin

begin to fancy it good for something. I wrote it more than a year ago, through mere complaisance, and thought it so little worthy of appearing in public, that I supposed it would either die almost as soon as born, or lead a solitary and obscure life in some forgotton desk of the person for whom it was unwillingly produced. But I perceive, that I was mistaken: it was not born for a monastic life: it has begun to suffer itself to be seen by stealth: difficulty enhances the price of every thing. It has acquired fame (as often happens) by exaggerated accounts of its beauty. This fame has created an eager desire of possession, in many who have been but too easily gratified by the first ravisher. And fearing, that my strolling Helen, passing from one of her pretended admirers to another, might possibly be heard of by your Excellence, before her existence was announced by myself, I now send her; not from thinking her worthy of favour, but to preclude the accusation of negligence. Here she is. Suspend most venerated princesses, your natural gentleness and candour: treat her with severity; make her do penance, and regard her as a disobedient daughter, who has had the ~~affront~~ to elope from  
her

her father. Your Excellence has long known, that I am unable to write any thing that is to be sung, without imagining some sort of music. What I now send, was written *to the music which accompanies it* (e). It is indeed a very simple melody; yet, if sung with that tender expression which I suppose, it will be sufficient to second the force of the words: and whatever music of a more refined and studied species shall be applied to them, may produce greater applause to the musician, but will certainly be less advantageous to the poet."

As no doubt remains that the *Canzonetta*, *La Partenza*, was written to the same air which the poet had set to *La Libertà*, I shall here present my musical readers with another copy of that air, with which I have been favoured by Doctor *Haydn*, who well remembers the having heard Metastasio sing it. There is some little difference between this copy and that with which I was furnished by *Cocchi*; and in order to enable the

(e) This is almost a proof that the air which Metastasio himself had set to his *Libertà*, had served during the time of inspiration, to regulate the metre of *La Partenza*, and probably of his *Palinodia*, as the versification of all these three poems, is the same.

English reader to form some faint idea of the beautiful sentiments of the original poem, and to furnish him with a second *excuse* for singing Metastasio's own melody, a version in the same short metre is attempted; in which, the difficulty will but too plainly appear, of compressing into our language, all the ideas of the original, in the same number of words.

There was a story current in Vienna, in 1772, concerning the occasion of the following Canzonet. The *Nice*, who had been the heroine of *La Libertà*, was not the heroine of *La Partenza*, nor was the distress which the poet describes, his own; but that of a young nobleman of very high rank, who having been so deeply enamoured of a beautiful young opera dancer, as to make his friends fear he would elope with her, and make her his wife, they entreated Metastasio to reason with the young lover, and try to prevail on him to let her be sent away to some remote country, in order to facilitate his cure. The poet tells the Princefs di Belmonte, in the preceding letter, that he wrote the Canzonet *unwillingly and through mere complaisance*; and in a letter to Farinelli, written about the same time, different

from

from that in which the little poem was sent, we have the story, though considerably disguised. In speaking of such performers of all kinds as were then employed in the Imperial theatre, and who when their engagements were out, might be of use in that of Madrid, he says: " By the inclosed memorial, you will perceive, that I recommend to you a female dancer, who is much applauded here. But you must not judge of her hastily. I am not acquainted with her, nor have I ever spoken to her in my life. But every one knows how much I am yours, and all apply to me. I am, however, not exempt from interest in this business, as I now perform an office which may be of some utility in its consequences; for by serving this lady, a very desirable work will be performed, which I shall explain to you in two words.

A young gentleman of my acquaintance, though married to a most beautiful lady, is over head and ears in love with this nymph. By dint of preaching, I have prevailed on him to part from her; but he protests, that he is unable to resist her attractions, if she remains here. If you could possibly employ her, I really believe she would

would be approved. But at all events, let me have such a letter from you, as when shewn, shall convince my friend that I did not deceive him, when I promised to write to you."

Late editors tells us, that the canzonet in question, was written in 1746 ; but it appears from the author's own account, that it was written in 1749 : we find, however, no mention made of it to his most confidential correspondents, till the year 1750.

The hapless lover seems to have imposed on the poet, the description of his sufferings, as a penance for the sacrifice which he had made to his eloquence ; and few, perhaps, who can assume the desperate circumstances of a lover, relinquishing the object of his passion for ever, yet retaining his affection without the most distant hope of its gratification, will think that the bard was ~~so~~<sup>a</sup> superficial judge of the mental disease of his patient.

## LA PARTENZA, or the SEPARATION.

Ec-co quel fiero if-tan-ter, Ni-ce, mia Nee, ad-  
 Ni-sa, the dreadful time Is come to bid a-  
  
 dia. Come vi-vrò ben mi-o, Co-è lon-  
 dicul Nor to a dif-tant clime Must I thy  
  
 tan da te? Co-è lon - - tan da te?  
 steps put - - sue, Must I thy steps pur - sue.  
  
 Lo vi-vrò sem-pre in pene, lo non avrò più  
 No hope will fate al - - low To sooth the harsh de -

bene,            *E tu, chi fa se mai*      *Ti sou - ve -*  
       cree,          *Yet who can tell if*            *thou Wilt e - ver*

*rai di me!*      *Ti sou - ver - - rai di*  
       think of me!      *Wilt e - ver think of*

me !  
       me !

## II.

*Soffri che in traccia almeno  
       Del mio perduta pace  
       Venga il pensier seguace  
       Su l'orme del tuo pié.  
       Sempre nel tuo camino,  
       Sempre m'avrai vicino;  
       E tu, chi fa se mai  
       Ti souverrai di me !*

Let me in volant thoughts  
       Ideal bliss renew,  
       By reminiscence taught  
       I'll still thy steps pursue.  
       Full in my sight as now  
       Thy image e'er will be :  
       Yet, who can tell if thou  
       Wilt ever think of me !

## III.

*Io fia remote sponde  
Meflo volgendo i paffi,  
Andrò cbiedendo a i paffi,  
La ninfa mia dor' è!  
Dall'una all'altra aurora,  
Te andrò cbiamando ognora :  
E tu, cbi fa se mai  
Ti souverrai di me !*

In solitary ways,  
While sorrowing I go,  
To rocks I'll sing thy praise,  
To echo tell my woe.  
The woods shall hear my vow,  
And Zephyr bring it thee :  
Yet, who can tell if thou  
Wilt ever think of me !

## IV.

*Io rivedrò svente  
Le amene piagge, o Nise,  
Dove vivea felice  
Quando vivea con te,  
A me faran tormento  
Centomemorie e cento :  
E tu, cbi fa se mai  
Ti souverrai di me !*

To scenes my restless mind  
Will ever have the clue,  
When time and fate were kind,  
And Nisa was in view.  
And these regretting, how  
From pain can I be free :—  
Yet, who can tell if thou  
Wilt ever think of me !

## V.

*Ecco (dirò) quelfonte,  
Dove avvampò di fegno,  
Ma poi di pace in segno  
La bella man mi dà.  
Qui si vivea di speme ;  
Là si languiva infieme ;  
E tu, cbi fa se mai  
Ti souverrai di me !*

Sometimes the fountain viewing,  
Where Nisa once look'd grave ;  
Then kindness sweet renewing,  
Her beauteous hand she gave.  
Here hope fate on thy brow,  
There fear no hope could see :  
Yet, who can tell if thou  
Wilt ever think of me !

## VI.

*Quantivedrai giungendo  
Al nuovo tuo soggiorno,  
Quanti vernis intorno,  
A offrirti amore e sé.  
Oh Dio ! Cbi fa fra tanti  
Teneri omaggi, e pianti,  
Oh Dio ! Cbi fa se mai  
Ti souverrai di me !*

What votaries soon will crowd  
Thy flurine both day and night,  
Declare their suit aloud,  
When I am out of sight ?  
Oh heav'n ! while these all bow  
And bend the supple knee,  
Who, Nisa, knows if thou  
Wilt e'er remember me ?

## VII.

*Pensa qual dolce strale,  
Cara mi lassi in seno :*

Think of the fatal dart,  
I evermore shall guard,

*Pensa*

*Pensa che ami Fileno  
Senza sperar mercede :  
Pensa, mia vita, a questo  
Barbaro addio funebre ;  
Pensa—Ah, cbi fa se mai  
Ti ferirrai di me !*

Deep rankling in my heart,  
Remote from all reward !  
Think from my misery now,  
How wretched I shall be—  
But dare I hope that thou  
Wilt ever think of me !

## LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

By the beginning of yours, dated the 13th of the present year, I perceive that, deceived by the clearfulness of the style of my letters, you think me in perfect health. But do not trust to that, my dear Gemello; you should remember, that fiction is the capital of us Poets; besides, you inspire me with good humour, whenever I take up the pen to write to you: for I find you the most efficacious antidote to the acidities and flatulencies with which my poor stomach and head are afflicted, and against all the other most genteel maledictions, that are lodged in my little shattered machine; which, however, manifests no outward sign of internal persecution. My circumference is not diminished; or my countenance fallen; and

very often, when I am engaged in the most violent conflict with my sufferings, I am obliged to thank my friends for their congratulations upon my apparent enviable state of health. This would wear out my patience, did I not reflect, that the same mockery happens to most of those, whom the world from external appearances, thinks arrived at the summit of human felicity, amidst the rank, riches, and honours, with which they are surrounded. How often would these illustrious wretches, gladly change their condition with the most miserable of their adorers ! Your Gemello has attempted to describe this in his *Giuseppe riconosciuto.*

*Se a ciascum l'interno affanno,  
Si legesse in fronte scritto ;  
Quanti mai che invidia fanno  
Ci farebbero pietà !*

If mental sufferings we could read  
Inscribed with truth upon each brow,  
With pity then our hearts would bleed,  
For those whom most we envy now !

But what hypochondraic dæmon has dipped me into misery ! What a pestiferous drug for low spirits ! If we wish for relief, let us have recourse to other means, as these have been long tried in vain.

You

You would have me pass for such a sorcerer in Poetry, as you are in Music; but, my dear Gemello, you will never have an accomplice in your crimes. If even my verses should have the magical power which you ascribe to them, I am always infinitely less dangerous than you. Among all the inhabitants of the globe, the number of those who understand the Italian language is very small; and among those, few have a taste for Poetry, and still fewer a critical knowledge of its beauties and defects. But every living creature has ears, and all feel themselves highly delighted by those subtil and insidious harmonical proportions, unknown to your predecessors, with which you only have had the power to render practicable, the secret road by which the ear carries on an intercourse with the heart. Therefore repent, my dear Wizard, repent of your crimes.

Where is the wonder that there should be disputes concerning the length or shortness of the Princess of Phrygia? Tastes have always differed. Some will have it long, and some short; and in my opinion both are right; because, according to the hackneyed axiom, *de gustibus non est disputandum.*

I am for the medium : and between the two extremes, for the short : yet, as a Poet, I must adopt the long, whether I will or no; for the following reason: That whimperer, Æneas, before he went to Carthage, to lead astray the poor widow of your acquaintance, had a wife in Troy ; and the D—I would have it, that she was called *Creusa*, like our Princess. Virgil, in his Æneid, repeats the name of this good lady, at least ten times, and always places it at the end of a verse, making it constantly consist of three syllables, of which the *penultima* is always long. Now, if I had the temerity to oppose the authority of Virgil, I should run the risk of excommunication from the whole poetical hierarchy ; nor would a pilgrimage to Delphos or Helicon, be sufficient to reconcile me with Parnassus. So that I must, whether I will or not, accommodate myself to the long name. But you, who for your comfort are not dipped in poetry, are under no necessity to attend to these circumstances. I admire your temporising, like Fabius Maximus, and contenting both parties. You could not have done better, than by ordering, as you have wisely done, that one half of the singers should contract the name, and  
the

the other lengthen it. The expedient pleases me so much, that I shall make use of it in Music; and when there is any doubt, whether a third should be flat or sharp, I shall play it flat with one hand, and sharp with the other: thus the ears of every one will be gratified.

The Countess d'Althan, Marechal Vazquez, and Count Esterhazy, salute you cordially. I have already mentioned in my preceding letter, the inundation of snuff; I therefore shall not fatigue you with resuming the subject, but merely tell you, that every pinch I take, is a memento of the amiable donor.

Let us now make peace about dates, because by the reply to my last letter, you have well paid me for that which was forgotten; but we shall still dispute affection, as I sustain that I love you more than I have a right to expect you to love me.

Vienna, Feb. 11, 1750.

## LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

WHAT kind of cruelty is this, my most inhuman, most ungrateful, and, in spite of all this, most beloved Gemello! Here, in order to obey your commands, am I up to the chin in mud: I have thirty horses to guide, and ten beasts who govern them: from morning to night am I beset with horse-shoes, saddles, harness, cloth-bags, coachmen, postillions, farriers, and saddlers, who spin my head like a top. I expect every post-day to be comforted with a letter from you, but none arrives. You have something else to do: I know it, and pity you; but could not you, at least, order somebody else, merely to write me word how you do? You have no conception, at such a distance, how many melancholy thoughts your silence generates. I love you as much as you merit, that is without end; and it is impossible for any one to love at that rate, and not be afraid. I never doubt of your heart, knowing it as I do. It is too great,  
and

and too worthy, not to coincide with one that is so much yours as I am ; but the not hearing from you for such a length of time, is a fast too long and rigorous, for the Metaftasian stomach. Adieu ; I have no time to-day for a longer letter, having been occupied in your service another way. If I do not put the caravan in motion, I know not what would soon happen : I have no time to breathe. I sent you a canzonetta. Have you received it ? Adieu once more.

*P. S.* The letter already written is long enough ; and yet I cannot help making a little addition to it, in favour of the agreeable Mademoiselle Castellina ; to whom I advised the lubrious air of Aranjuez in company with her physician. I have always in my former letters begged of you to say and do a thousand kind things in my name ; but you have never given me the least assurance of having executed my commission. Can you be jealous ? Oh what a vile infirmity ! I pity you extremely, my dear Gemello, particularly, when I reflect, that no one is cured of this malady in Spain. We good people of Germany know nothing of such a disorder, except in a most moderate degree ; just as a mere sauce to love. You southern folks, devoid

of all charity for your neighbours, want to keep the passion of love wholly to yourselves, without affording the slightest portion of its sweets to any one else. But enough of this; you should thank heaven, that we are so far asunder; otherwise, in spite of your numerous merits, and the paucity of mine, I should give way to all the rage I could muster against you; but these are castles in the air. I threaten you with war from the Danube, and you laugh defiance on the Manzanare. *Encore facice sa spotazelle.*  
*Ai ragione e no poco de ccbiu.*

I wrote to you a few weeks ago, concerning a young person, called Signora *Colomba Mattei*; and I wrote you the truth, though I was commanded to make her panegyric. I hear that Madame Teſi has written to you about her likewise. Without the least mystery, she is a good moveable, and pleases here very much. I beg you will write to me in such a manner that I may shew my principal how obedient I have been. Act, however, in such a manner as shall suit you best. There is no harm in your being informed of the merchandise of this place, as you may probably have occasion for it in your future theatrical direction.

My

My dear Gemello, your love is every thing to me, and wants to be sweetened by no presents: snuff, however, excepted, which cannot be refused. There is such a miserable scarcity here at present of this drug, that the worst quality is sold by the dealers at an enormous price; while the best, which can only be brought in with the greatest difficulty, is but ordinary, and my nose is an impertinent member, which will not be content with every sort. If you will take pity on it, know that it dislikes dry snuff, and has positively an insuperable aversion for that of a reddish colour. Its favourite tint, is a pale yellow. I have already spoken to the dealer, who, in consideration of my poetical faculty, will make me pay only three florins a pound, and will give me the earliest intelligence of the arrival of the chest that is directed to me. I beg you will not think me troublesome, because, on the subject of snuff, it is impossible to be modest.

Vienna, May 2, 1750.

Metastasio's correspondence with Sig.  
Fran. d'Argenvilliers, the banker, at Rome,  
began this year; and though these letters  
chiefly

chiefly turn on his money concerns, in that city, and at Naples, yet there are in them frequent traits of friendship, gratitude, and genius, which in the Italian language are interesting and beautiful.

After acknowledging the kind manner in which he had honoured the draughts which his brother had presented to him, he says, " I shall not enter on the panegyrics due to your attentive, diligent, and friendly exactitude. I feel, that the occasion which I have for it, far surpasses my power of praise. I hope you think my heart well organized ; and *that* taken for granted, my mere acknowledgment is worth a hundred orations of Demosthenes. Continue to honour me with the place which you have assigned me in your good heart, which I shall always most anxiously endeavour to deserve."

In the next letter he says : " The eagerness which you manifest for my coming to Rome, I can assure you, without poetical fiction, adds many *stimuli* to my own passion for such a visit. But how many cursed flutes should I have to tune, before that could happen ! Yet who knows ? I have not relinquished hope. In the meantime, I beg to be

be honoured with your affection, in spite of my involuntary Laconism ; but pray believe me orientally, and with the most sincere, grateful, and tender esteem, &c."

In another letter of the same year, after thanking Sig. Argenvillier's for his kind offices, he adds : " I am proud of your friendship, and correspondence ; but I should be more secure and tranquil, if you could suggest to me some expedient in my power, of which I am ignorant, to be of a little use to you in return, that I might flatter myself with not always spunging upon you for my own advantage. Pray analyse my abilities. It is true, for my mortification, that the herbs in my garden are useless ; and yet, in the hands of an excellent botanist, who knows what virtues may be found in them ? "

In answer to this letter, his friend seems to have kept up the botanical metaphor, to which Metastasio, on the point of setting out for his annual excursion into Moravia, replies :

" You send me a botanical challenge ; but, thank heaven, my departure furnishes me with a plausible pretext for shunning such a trial. I hardly know a nettle from a thistle,

thistle, and you speak to me of dittany and wound-wort. But the postilion is impatient. Adieu."

We shall return, chronologically, to this correspondence; but, at present, it is necessary to resume that with Farinelli.

By the irregularity of the post, Metastasio had been deprived of letters from his friend at Madrid a considerable time; and when they arrived, after a long interval, he addressed him in the following manner.

## L E T T E R V.

### TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

At length you have given way to remorse, and your long, affectionate, and cordial letter, has made me ample amends for all my cruel sufferings, on account of your silence. I thank you heartily, and send you a legion of embraces. I shall not exaggerate the pleasure which you have given me, as you, who have my heart in your possession, may understand me best when I am silent.

Now I shall reply to your letter, paragraph by paragraph; but if it were possible for

for me ever to be short in writing to you, I should be brief now ; as I am pressed for time. I hear, from the venerated Marquis Ensenada, the affectionate manner in which you speak of me, from the extreme goodness of your heart. But you were born to taste the blessings of sweetening humanity. The possession of a friend of such a caliber, is not a small melioration of existence.

Your music to my canzonet is expressive, graceful, and the legitimate offspring of one arrived at supremacy in the art. I thank you for communicating it to me, particularly as a testimony of your love ; but if it was maliciously sent, as a critique on mine, I shall take care to revenge myself on the first poetry that you shall send to the press. Yet, if the devil should tempt you to become a poet, who knows but you may unsheathe some other latent talent ? Oh nothing else is wanting to complete my ruin, but to have you for a rival. *Sia ditto n'funno a lo maro (f).* And so my canzonet has obtained the approbation of the Deity of the Manzanare ? And the name of the Poet

(f) This sentence is Neapolitan, and implies : *may the idea go to the bottom of the sea.*

Metaftasio

Metaftasio has had the glory of being pronounced by royalty? My beloved Gemello, you who have procured me an honour which consoles me for all the labours of my life, support me in this elevation: and if you cannot in justice exaggerate my merit, make known at least my humble joy and gratitude.

I hope the duet which I inclose will manifest my eagerness to be of some use; it certainly is not the worst of my productions. Read it with attention, and you will find, exclusive of the tenderness and character of the two interlocutors, an imitation of an answer made to Louis XIV. by the neice of Cardinal Mazarin, who seeing him shed tears at her being separated from him cries out: *Are you a King, yet weep, and suffer me to depart?* This corresponds very well with the incidents of the Opera. Believe me, my dear friend, that ever desirous of seconding your wishes to the utmost of my power, I would on all accounts do it in the Opera you desire, and what I will do for you, I will do for no other living creature; but this is not invention, but a long mental fatigue, and violent application which I have never yet undergone without danger.

It

It is true that life is short, and for this very reason, I know that you would not wish me to make it still shorter. If I find myself able to oblige you, most certainly I shall want no spur. I am so much yours, that I seem to partake of the favours and honours heaped on you with so liberal a hand, by your most clement sovereign; so, that it almost seems necessary for me to thank them not only in your name, but my own. And on account of this merit, I forgive fortune all the cruelty with which she has treated me in my own particular. You may judge whether she is my enemy or no, by reflecting, that with such a twin-brother as yourself, with the protectors whom you procure me, the divinities whom you render benevolent, and such numberless reasons of equity operating in my favour, I have been so long unable, with such pains, recommendations, and humble prayers, to obtain any thing either from favour or justice. I console myself, that life, as you observe, is short, and that Madame Fortune, will not long divert herself in persecuting me. Indeed, my experience is such, as renders me less vulnerable, and less sensible to the

strokes of this capricious enemy than formerly.

If you should employ Jomelli, I trust you will thank me for it; and if ever you should see him, you will be attached to him, as he is certainly the most amiable *gourmand* that ever existed. At present, he is Maestro di Capella of St. Peter's at Rome, and is the darling of that city; not only for his professional abilities, but complacence, docility, graceful deportment, and good morals. And all that are not prejudiced, speak of him in this manner.

Oh, how delighted has the Countess d'Althan been with the chapter which you sent me for her! She, and all the ladies of her acquaintance, to whom I have read a part of your letter in the garden which you know of, have cried out, in chorus, what I should tell you, what I should do for you, and the Lord knows what. A quire of paper would not contain all the congratulations, salutations, remembrances, and panegyrics, with which I am charged. And now I think it high time to finish, that the Postman might have this letter in time. Adieu, my most beloved twin. Preserve yourself

yourself carefully, for your own sake, for that of your friends, and, particularly, for him who is most constantly and affectionately yours.

Vienna, June 13th, 1750.

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## L E T T E R VI.

TO THE SAME.

Two of your most dear letters, though of different dates, are arrived together: the one of the 18th of May, and the other of June 9th. They have travelled extremely slow; but old as they are, coming from you, they have all the charms of youth. Let us answer them chronologically. You have celebrated St. Peter's day, without knowing it. But let me thank you, and explain the mystery. Not being able to have your March executed in my own house, with a sufficient number of instruments, I gave it to the obliging Count d'Althan, and he proposed having it performed in the great Garden-hall.

On the evening of St. Peter, whose name I bear, while the company was playing at cards, and thinking as little of Music as of a pilgrimage to Mecca; they were all put into the utmost astonishment, by a terrible clangor of instruments, which threw both the card-players and by-standers, into attitudes ridiculous enough for a picture. The surprise soon degenerated into tumult: they threw down their cards, overset the tables, and ran against each other to the field of battle. Here the sonorous March, and alternate graceful Minuet, tranquillized these seditious people, who were wholly silent, till the instruments ceased to play, and then burst into a general applause. I then, with a modest air, returned thanks to the gentlemen and ladies for the honour they had done this bagatelle. What! they all cried out, is it your Music? No, said I, but it is the same as if it was mine, being composed by my twin-brother. Here I was obliged to give a history of our twin-ship, and it was decided by acclamation, that there was but one Farinelli. Many symphonies were played, but nobody would go home till the March had been again performed. Now, my dear Geniello,

Gemello, I was delighted to be in your company, even during this applause. But as to the thoughts, conversations, and dreams which this night may have occasioned, I wash my hands of them, and leave them to your conscience.

I am proud to find, that my letter had the power to move two sisters of such different characters. I beg you will reverence in my name, not only the gentle, but the scornful Lady. Tastes are various: hence each may have her merit, in a different way; but, mixed together, they would constitute a *dolce piccante*, of the most provoking kind. Tell them, that they should not despise the fondness of friends. Their fondness is different from that which we have for the fair sex: the first is encreased by absence, the second by proximity. The first occupies the mind; the second agitates the blood; but that which does not disturb the mind, can turn the brain. If all this is ineffectual, tell them, at least, for our credit, that whoever can be an affectionate friend, would not make a contemptible lover.

Our incomparable Countess d'Althan salutes you without end, and is much pleased

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by

by your favourable opinions of D. Gaetano. I have made her laugh with the Macherone Pasticcio, and have no doubt but that it will be mentioned in her letters to Paris, where her nephew at present resides.

The generous partiality with which, according to your letter, I am honoured by the most worthy Marquis Ensenada, is merely in consequence of our near relationship. But now you have seduced him in my favour, I beg you will not undeceive him. Impose upon him still further about my transcendent merit; but, whenever you would speak to him, free from all danger of exaggeration, pray tell him of my veneration and gratitude: for I defy you to surpass the truth on those subjects.

I am glad to find that you remember our banker, who has treated us with such great courtesy, that gratitude is due to him. But you are mistaken in the person. I never spoke to you concerning Rezzani of Ham-bro, whom I do not know; but of Messrs. Schmitmer of Vienna, with whom I have had dealings. Whenever you have an opportunity of serving them, I beg you will not confound names.

Sig. Amorevoli, who now sings on the Vienna stage for the second time, says, that you formerly invited him to Madrid, but that he could not then leave his court: you however wrote, or employed somebody else to write, to desire him to acquaint you when he would be at liberty; with which request he complied, but has received no answer. He knows not whether his letter has miscarried, or whether some good friend has not given an unfavourable account of him. He has begged of me to inclose a letter addressed to you, that he may be sure of its being safely transmitted to you, and duly answered. He would willingly prefer Madrid to London, but should be sorry to lose both \*. So that he entreats you to favour him with a categorical answer. This performer is so well known, particularly by yourself, that I should do him an injury, in attempting to describe his merit. I shall only say, that I always hear him with the same pleasure, and that no Tenor, not ex-

\* Amorevoli had been in England before: he arrived here in 1741, with Monticelli, and the Visconti, and remained in this kingdom, till the year 1744. His knowledge, taste, and expression, well merited the praises bestowed on him by Metastasio.

cepting even Paita, has such an effect on my feelings: so that if this man were heard in Spain, particularly being new to that country, my opinion is, that he would do you great honour. It appears to me by the account he gives of his engagements, which I do not very well understand, that he believes himself at liberty from the Carnival of 1752, to that of 1753.

Well, for the present, I think you have had a good dose; another day I shall be still more dry and prolix. Continue to love me, if you would not be thought ungrateful: for I believe it would be difficult to find a single person from Madagascar to Nova Zembla, who does not know with what esteem, sincerity, and affection, I am yours,

Vienna, July 18, 1750.

## L E T T E R VII.

TO THE SAME.

TO-DAY, it certainly is not any business that we have to transact which exacts from me these few lines, but mere impatience to embrace you; my hypochondriac affections are infrequent want of a cordial draught of Farnelli,

nelli, otherwise my humours would become insupportable. I know not whether this declaration will please the two sisters who are such enemies to friendship ; but, at all events, some narcotic will be found in your dispensary to appease them.

Now I have the pen in my hand, I must tell you that, according to advices which I received from the Duke di Salas, your full chest ought now to be floating in the gulph of Lyons ; and that our cavalry being in the best state, from the tenth of last month, ought to be at this instant in which I am writing, advanced far into France. So that our fleet and our caravan must needs be approaching happily to their destination. I wish to both, not mine, but your luck, and am extremely impatient to see which will get the better.

Our good and admirable Jomelli, is out of his wits to execute your commission well. He has written me a very long letter, in which he speaks of nothing else. I am very anxious that he should please the public of Spain. For your part, who judiciously love harmony and *expression*, I have no doubt of your approbation : but in Italy, at present, there is a taste for nothing but extrav-

gance, and vocal symphonies ; in which we sometimes hear an excellent violin, flute, or hautbois ; but never the singing of a human creature. So that music is now to excite no other emotion than that of surprise. Things are carried to such excess, that if not soon reformed, we shall justly become the buffoons of all other nations. Composers and performers being only ambitious of tickling the ear, without ever thinking of the hearts of the audience, are generally condemned in all theatres, to the disgraceful office of degrading the acts of an opera, into *intermezzi* for the dances, which occupy the attention of the people, and chief part of the spectators. And it is to you, my good master, that this degeneracy is chiefly owing. It is your happy and wonderful powers, which all are striving in vain to imitate. But even to limp after you, requires such legs as none are gifted with.

Mercy on us ! I thought I had done, when here comes a letter from you, dated May 27th, which has been opened, and I am glad of it. I seal my letters from habit, not the desire of secrefy. Nor shall I, in future, ever write a word less than I should, if this had never happened. I ever had an  
aversion

aversion to such things as fear public examination.

If I do not instantly finish my letter, it cannot go this evening. Prostrate at the foot of the throne, not only the poor *Attilio Regolo*, but also the humble author. Love and believe me *per omnia saecula saeculorum*.

Vienna, August 1, 1750.

## L E T T E R    VIII.

### TO THE SAME.

I RECEIVE two of your letters, one of a date that was once known to God and yourself; at present, perhaps, to none but God alone. The other is of the 11th of August. I ought and should have answered them in an ample manner, the subject required it; but how could I? Being in the country where the company is numerous, I am never suffered to be alone, but to sleep: so that there is no possibility for a polite man to obtain a rag of solitude, either to do good or evil. Content yourself, therefore, for the present, with a Laconic answer, which being written under such inconveniences, may reasonably aspire at the merit of a long letter.

I must

I must confess, my dear Gemello, that among all my poetical imaginations, I have never been able to find the mine of diamonds in the mountains of Moravia, which you talk of. These are miracles reserved for certain divinities of the first order. These are words of course: so that I shall not attempt to reconcile their excess, with my too great want of merit. But while you are trying, with all the tenderness of twinship, to render these divinities propitious to me, if you cannot honestly exalt my merits, speak of my submission, speak of my gratitude, and assure yourself, that you run no risk of deviating from truth, however lively and violent may be your expressions. Accustomed as you have long been to inhabit my heart, you know its most secret recesses, and are able to judge of the sincerity of its emotions.

Now your royal oracle has pronounced in favour of my Attilio Regolo, I defy Sophocles, Euripides, and all the Athenian Parnassus. The sublime suffrage which I can boast, is worth that of all ancient Greece. But my dear Gemello, in our most recondite confidence, let me disclose to you my wonder. Without injuring the angelic penetration  
of

of your divinity, I must confess, I never should have flattered myself, that the austerity of my Regulus could ever have been suffered in that sphere. The delicacy of sex, is naturally averse to it, and royal indulgence and delights do not accustom the palate to the harshness of that rigid Roman virtue which I have endeavoured to delineate in my Attilio. A very uncommon solidity of character is necessary to vanquish in this manner, both sex, and education. Oh, my fortunate Gemello ! If I was capable of envy, you would be the object of it. I thank you for the defence which you have made of us poor modern Romans : but conscience secretly reproves me. Whoever places us below the ancients, has reason on his side ; and the reflection is worthy of him who made it.

But did any tyrant of Syracuse or Agrigentum, ever torment a poor gentleman, as you torment me for an opera ? And have I not reason to call you a marine monster ! I begin to think you are breeding, as such a longing fit never appertained to the masculine gender. You then believe, that continually tormenting my poor brains, is invention. Do you regard it as a fable, that I

live

live in the service of a sovereign, who delights in poetry, and, luckily, from excess of clemency, particularly of mine ; yet during five years, I have not been in a situation to write a single verse in compliance with her repeated insinuations ! Do you believe that I should not have been desirous of gratifying a twin brother, and of procuring the favour of such exalted patrons ? Rather, in charity, believe that I have thought and still think of it ; and that if it is not accomplished, it will not be from want of zeal, but from a mere physical and invincible impossibility. The cessation of all amusements for a considerable time, occasioned here by an unhappy event, of which I shall not speak through respect for my mistress's most just and laudable affliction, permits me at present, to think of undertaking, leisurely, some poetical composition. I shall attempt the ford ; heaven grant that I may not be left in the passage.

Jomelli wrote me word, sometime ago, that he received an act of *Demetrio*, with which he was extremely pleased. And my brother at Rome tells me, that he had heard the duet : so that he is at work. Jomelli, however, from mere complacence, is desirous

rous of pleasing every body, and every body wants to employ him. He must, therefore, be stimulated ; I do it, and you must not fail to do it by means of your excellent secretary Marchesini, whom I now seize the opportunity of saluting. I beg you to present my invariable respects to the worthy Marquis of Ensanada, and tell him, that if a motion is not given to the waters of Parthenope in my favour, they will be quite stagnant, to which they seem much inclined. I am unworthy of so much trouble, but the vanquishing my evil fortune, is an enterprise to tempt Spanish generosity.

The most excellent lady of the mansion, and all her numerous guests, charge me with compliments to you. I would give you a list of the candidates of both sexes, but neither time nor my head will stand by me ; so I hasten to conclude, with my ancient and most constant affection.

Fraim, September 15, 1750.

L E T-

## LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR letter of the 3d of last month, in which you tell me of the happy success of our little Pegasian expedition, is arrived, and gives me the greatest pleasure, in the midst of the most cruel persecutions of my nervous affections; which, this year, are more obstinate, indiscrete, and intolerable than usual. I shall not describe to you my present sufferings, as it would too much excite your pity, and encrease my own impatience. In short, all I have for it, is heroically to tolerate the present, and force myself to hope for future good. I sigh to convince your glorious patrons, if not of my abilities, at least of my zeal and attention to obey them worthily. I am extremely impatient to hear what was the fate of the last expedition in their opinion, and, afterwards, in that of the public.

As soon as ever my complaints grant me a truce, I shall obtain great honour by the beautiful *Arietta* that you have sent me, which

which by merely mumbling it between the teeth, reminds me of my incomparable Gemello. In the mean time I have had it sung by Sig. Tedeschi detto Amadosi, a Soprano deserving of much esteem; as, in a room, particularly, he is, in my opinion, superior to all those who at present tread the stage in the rest of Europe ; and here, at court, and among the nobility, he is justly in very high favour. This performer comes to entertain and solace me in my doleful hypochondriacs : and when your music is to be sung, I assume the character of Maestro, and he has the patience to bear with me.

I should write much more, but my head is disobedient. So that after assuring you of the most partial salutations of yours, and my most worthy Countess d'Althan, I embrace you with my wonted affection.

Vienna, December 13, 1750.

This was the last letter of the year 1750 to Farinelli, which appears in the collection. Before we advance further, it will be necessary to return back a few months, in order to resume the poet's correspondence with  
Sig.

Sig. Filipponi, to whom he generally writes with much vivacity and good humour.

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## LETTER X.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

NEITHER my long residence in the country, the idle carnival, nor the troublesome and lying compliments of the season, have prevented me from writing sooner; but the want of necessary, useful, or, at least, amusing, materials, joined to the natural horror of a vacuum, which I feel in common with mankind, particularly in letters, and in the purse. Think not that our friendship can suffer diminution, from this interval of silence. Its roots are so strong, so ancient, and so deep, that they can well bear a dry season or two, without injury. It is not the plane tree, the palm, or the oak, but the leek, the lettuce, and the radish, that perish, if not constantly watered.

It is very true, that there are many different proposals for reprinting my works; but, to tell you the truth, I feel no temptation to encourage any of them, unless induced by the pleasure of seeing my children more magnificently

magnificently dressed. I know not, as yet, who is most likely to excite this paternal frailty ; and I shall not communicate the few inedited pieces I can find, nor engage myself in the painful task of an exact and general correction, in order to encrease the number of bad or middling editions which are already multiplied more than is necessary.

You have perhaps already perused my *Attilio Regolo*. Count Canale sometime ago, sent a copy of it to Turin. I wish to have your opinion of it. If you want to know mine, here it is. \*

Though according to letters from Saxony, the tranquillity of northern affections has been much disturbed by it at Dresden, and though they write me word, that the performers of S. Samuele at Venice, have represented it with great success, I am not certain that it will ever occupy the first place among my most popular dramas ; yet I think it the most solid, the highest finished, and abounding with the fewest defects of any of my operas ; and, in short, regard it as that, which in preference to all the others, I would preserve, if only one could be saved from destruction.

You have sent back the Count and Countess Canale very thin ; though in common honesty you ought to have returned to us all that we consigned to you. We shall therefore not let you have them again in a hurry.

I am glad that you are pleased with the country mouse (*g*) ; but this kind of labour is not worth the pains it costs. To do it well, requires genius ; and whoever has a capital of his own, is unwilling to reduce himself to the meagre praise of having brought to light the labours of others.

Forget not to keep me alive in the memory of the most worthy Count della Rocca, and the Marquis Ormea, whom I love and venerate as much as they deserve, that is, without end. I recommend myself, to the pious fervor of your amiable priests, and am &c. (*b*)

Vienna, February 20, 1750.

(*g*) This alludes to his translation of the sixth satire of the second book of Horace, which did not appear in any edition of his works till after his decease. It is now generally placed in the thirteenth or fourteenth volume, with his other posthumous works. The translation is in *Terze Rime*, the versification of Dante, and is extremely close and happy. The original text is printed at the bottom of the page.

(*b*) This was a title which he always, in pleasantry, gave to Signora Filippini.

L. E. T.

## LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

I owe you an answer to two charming letters, and wished to pay you with interest; but have not had time to attempt it. And I now snatch a moment that is hardly sufficient for the acknowledgement of my debt, and prevent proscription. If I were to tell you all my impediments, you would be indulgent; but their detail would occupy more room than a categorical answer; and the excuse would be more tiresome than the supposed negligence.

I thank you for your partial analysis of my *Regulus*; you gratify my pious prurience by it, as this opera is the Benjamin of all the rest. The German actors here have represented it in their own language, with great applause; but I have never yet had the courage to go near it. The Teutonic air, in a Roman hero, seems to me like the boar in the sea, and the dolphin in the wood, which Horace laughs at.

ccc 2

You

You have procured me the good opinion of the most worthy Marchioness of Lenzi; take care to preserve it for me; represent to her how highly I think myself honoured by her notice; and how much for her sake I am grieved, at having so little merited her favour, unless she places to my account, the infinite respect I have for her.

Vienna, June 16, 1750.

## L E T T E R XII.

### TO THE SAME.

A MOST agreeable letter from you was delivered to me in Moravia, at the same time as a command from court to return to Vienna, in order to write and direct the representation of a very short drama, which is to be sung by three Arch-duchesses, in celebration of their most august mother's birthday. This occupation, more indeed of body than mind, has obliged me to make a short parenthesis in the midst of all my civil, œconomical, political, literary, and voluptuous affairs. You must not, therefore, accuse me of negligence, for not answering your letter sooner, nor for doing it now in so sum-

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mary a way ; as I am obliged to divide myself among a great number of creditors.

The printer of Turin does my writings great honour, in supposing that an edition in 12mo. little different from innumerable others already published, would meet with purchasers. His plan does not tempt my vanity. The inedited pieces which I have still by me, have occasion for the ax and the file ; therefore the time necessary for preparing them, would vex him, and fatigue me. As to the order in which they should appear, I have nothing more to say, than that I wish all the writings of my early youth might be placed at the end of the work ; but as the rest have no connexion with each other, they may be disposed at pleasure. Tell him, if it is not too late for him to profit from the information, that I have lately received petitions of the same kind from Leipsic, Paris, and Piacenza ; and have made the same answer.

In order to be doing something to remind you of me, I shall give directions for an excellent little picture of myself, which is now in my possession, to be copied for you.

Vienna, October 22, 1750

## LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

I SHOULD have answered your last letter sooner, had I not waited till the picture was finished; and now, it being Christmas Eve, I must be short, as the several offices, active and passive, have absorbed the whole day.

I send you one picture of me in wax, which is most excellently done. Another in miniature, which I have had copied three times; and, at length, with tolerable success. It is now in the hands of a most tedious engraver. When finished, you shall have a print likewise from this. Adieu. I write in company, and therefore can add nothing more than usual good wishes.

Vienna, December 24, 1750.

## LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME

DURING my silence, I had to combat with my complaints, and with the muses. I have written an opera, by command of my

my most august Patron ; I finished it but yesterday, and you are to regard my writing to you to-day, as no small mark of my favour.

In order to appease you, I enclose half a dozen Metastasios, upon whom you may satiate your vengeance, and then resume your good humour. Adieu. Make my reverences to the amiable priestess ; look upon this as a long letter, and try to fancy that it merits such complaisance.

Vienna, April 19, 1751.

## L E T T E R XV.

### TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

NOTWITHSTANDING appearances are so much against me, my plagues and infirmities were such, as not to permit me to send you even two lines by last Saturday's post, in answer to your most agreeable letter of the 25th of November, which I received in the usual way ; and at present, I know not whether my eagerness to write to you will be sufficient to subdue my difficulties. But let us speak of pleasanter things.

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The

The Minister Plenipotentiary, Don Antonio di Azlor, from your court, is arrived. I have been twice at his door in vain; and he has been once at mine, with the same success. But at length we have met, and we now see one another almost every evening, at the assemblies in Althrop house. He has already had an audience of my most August Patrons, and I am told, has been most graciously received. He pleases me extremely; and such seems to have been his fate with the nobility, and *corps diplomatique*. He has an agreeable seriousness in his aspect, an openness in speaking, and so noble, courteous, and judicious an address, that I hope he will worthily and usefully sustain the character with which he is honoured. There is no asserting any thing positive for the future; but whoever begins well, has half performed his task. I have interrogated him very much concerning yourself, as all are solicitous about what is most dear to them, and I am extremely pleased with his answers. He assures me, that your prosperity has not in the least altered the sweetnes and moderation of your character. A rock, according to ancient and modern examples, extremely difficult

to

to avoid ; and much more amidst the favours, than the persecutions of fortune. He has assured me, that though mounted to such an enviable situation, you have not an enemy. To obtain forgiveness for such prosperity, I can easily conceive how wise, how disinterested, and how beneficent must be your conduct, I congratulate you on these inestimable characteristics, which are your own, and not the gifts of fortune ; and I congratulate myself for having known and loved you, before you had given such illustrious proofs of your estimable and amiable qualities.

If you knew JOMELLI personally, you would not wonder at the indolence of which you complain. He has a tranquil and serene mind, and loves to saunter at his ease, and indulge the fatness of his well-fed body ; giving way to every impulse that can save him the trouble of resistance ; so that he is always influenced by those that are nearest him. Grieve at this on your own account, if you will, or rather deplore in him this most troublesome defect, but never believe that he ever meant to deceive you. A fraud would involve his pacific disposition in too much trouble.

I would

I would say a thousand things more, but my head has protested against it, for some-time. Adieu.

Vienna, January 9, 1751.

## L E T T E R XVI.

### TO THE SAME.

You began the world by performing miracles: and it is not one of a common sort, to make me write verses at this time of life, when I have more reason to execrate my impertinent infirmities, which plague me more and more every day. And you will perform another miracle, if they should let me finish this letter.

Here is Didone for you, abridged, as much as possible, without injuring it too much, and even corrected in some place. In the first act, I have not been able to make much use of the sheers; in the second, but little; in the third, however, they have been very active. The number of airs is that prescribed by yourself. But in the third act, as Jarbas, after the combat, would have come in without an air, and there is a change of scene, I have written two verses  
which

which connect with the sense and situation of the recitative; but if sung, *arcibrevissima*, to a *Cavatina*, they will give spirit to the entrance of the personage, and afford the instruments an opportunity of seconding the mutation, without lengthening the opera a minute. The *Licenza* (*i*), if self-love does not seduce me, seems not to partake of my suffering; which only says, that it is all the little I should have been able to do, if I had not been so tormented. Pray let the mechanist read over and over again the remarks prefixed to the MS. that he may understand and faithfully express your ideas and mine.

I have received by the favour of the worthy minister plenipotentiary from your court, free even from the heavy expences and inexorable demands of this custom-house, your magnificent present of snuff, porcelain, bark, vanilla, and other unknown articles. I return thanks to the generous donor. And wish I may ever possess the faculty of meriting such enviable kindness. If my head

(*i*) Epilogue, or *Finale*, generally a compliment to the sovereign for whose court, and at whose expence, the opera is performed; like the prologues to the operas of Lulli, written by Quinault for Louis XIV.

would

would permit me to write much, this would be an excessive long chapter. It will be so still, when I am able. In the mean time, be assured, that I am unable to say whether I am more glad or more confused, I hope that the Marquis d'Enseñada, to whom I beg my most humble respects, will believe this truth; and that you will do the same.

You wrote me word sometime ago, that I should find, in a flask of earth, *an herb that was good for the breast, and a diuretic.* Now instead of this herb, I have found a white substance resembling soap, but what it is, no one in Vienna can tell. If you wish that your present should not be useless, I beg you will not forget, in your answer, to tell me its name, virtue, and the manner of using it. However, if it has been spoiled on the road, I must beg you to send me another flask.

The Countess d' Althan thanks you for the little canister of siruff; but, luckily, it is too good for ladies; so that it will come to my share. Adieu; you have performed the second miracle, at which I rejoice, and am, &c.

Vienna, January 30, 1751.

L E T -

## LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

You will wonder at my delay in answering your letter; but when you know the cause, you will wonder still more, at my being able to steal a moment to write these two lines. After my last letter, I went into Moravia for the country air, which my health, more impaired than usual, required. In the beginning of Autumn, we were assailed among the mountains by a winter extraordinary; so furnished with ice, with wind, and all the ornaments of December, that in despite of stoves, chimneys, and pellices lined with fur, there was no one of the company who escaped a cough, accompanied, more or less, with its usual attendants; and I, not less favoured than the rest, had a due share of these blessings. But at last, when the season began to grow milder, and I hoped to recover my strength, comes an express with an Imperial mandate to transfer myself to Vienna, as it was determined that the opera for the ladies, which was to have come out in December, should be represented in October. So that, with the blessed remains of

my defluxion and other numerous complaints, I am here in the midst of a crowd of tumultuous applications. For besides instructing four young ladies, who are quite novices, both in the language and use of the stage, the weight of the director of the music falls on my poor shoulders, without my deriving from it either honour or advantage. This is one of the court phenomena, in which, without the least crime, I shall suffer all the penalty. You know what it is to be a stage rudder; it is therefore needless to describe to you my situation. The opera will be brought on the stage in eight or ten days. I send you the words before they are published, not only as my dear Gemello has the preference in this, as well as in the rest of my heart, but because it seems very fit for his purpose. Adieu. A crowd of people are waiting for me.

Vienna, October 18, 1751.

## L E T T E R XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

You must imagine, that, till to-day, I could neither have the book, nor a moment

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to

to finish this letter; which is the exact truth. I shall not plague myself in trying to persuade you of this, because you have been often in my case; but with political and œconomical circumstances, much more favourable than mine!

This evening the opera appears on the stage for the first time, therefore addio.

*A propos* to the stage, at Naples my business is pleasantly sung. They have told my agent, that when the archbishop of Montreal is provided for, *something will be given to me*. The archbishopric of Montreal becomes vacant by the death of Cardinal Acquaviva, and God knows which of our nephews may live to see him provided for. Then, my beloved Gemello, what are we to understand by this precious *something*? But I have no time for declamation; and you may easily conceive whether I have been able to write verses. Adieu, once more; they are all crucifying me at this moment.

Vienna, October 27, 1751.

L E T-

## LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

YOURS from the Escorial, of the 12th, of last month, afflicts me with the news of the bad state of your dear health, and aggravates my own sufferings; which amidst my plagues in attending the rehearsals of *Il Re Pastore*, were more intolerable than usual. One of the disagreeable effects of this tumult, is my not having been able to second the wishes of my beloved Gemello, in writing such a festival drama as he had suggested to me. I had intended to devote myself to his service in the country, but I was there attacked by a fever and fluxion, on my arrival; and before I was recovered, comes an express which obliged me to gallop to Vienna, where I alone was forced to practice every trade, or rather to be *Jack of all Trades*. And amidst my fatigues and the enormous coldness of the Theatre; my ill-cured fluxion has taken such deep root, and entered into an alliance with my other complaints so closely, that it affects my spirits as well as my health. I comfort myself with the hope that *Il Re Pastore*, which I sent you

the

the instant it came out of the press, will answer your purpose extremely well. It is gay, tender, amorous, short ; and has, indeed, all the necessary requisites for your wants. No representation here is remembered to have extorted such universal applause. The ladies who performed in it, did wonders, particularly as to action. The music is so graceful, so well adapted and so lively, that it enchants by its own merit, without injuring the passion of the personage ; and pleases excessively. I should instantly have had it copied and sent to you ; but as the four ladies are all *sopranos*, and there is no part for any other kind of voice, except that for Alessandro, which is a tenor, I did not think it could be of use to you, without alterations. If ever you should wish to have it, read the drama with attention, cast the parts ; and I will prevail on the composer himself to adjust it to your purpose, or new set whatever you please. The author is Sig. *Giuseppe Bono*: he was born at Vienna of Italian parents, and sent by Charles VI. to study music under Leo, with whom he passed his first youth\*. I know two other German

man

\* This is the first time that the name of this composer has come to my knowledge ; of his works I am still ignorant ;

man composers, Gluck, and Wagenseil. The first has surprising fire, but is mad; and the other is a great harpsichord player. Gluck composed an opera for Venice, which was very unfortunate. He has composed others here with various success. I am not a man to pretend to judge of him.

My dear Gemello, I can write no more, my head rebels. Adieu, if you wish me to be well, shew me a good example; and believe that I am more vexed than you can be, at my inability to oblige you. You know so well how sincerely I speak, that it is unnecessary to enforce this assertion.

Vienna, November 16, 1751.

Soon after the performance of *Attilio Regolo* at Dresden, the *Mingotti*, who there first distinguished herself in the part of *Attilia*, in that opera, being invited to the theatre royal at Naples, to sing in the same drama, obtained a letter of recommendation to the Princefs di Belmonte, from Metastasio,

however, the character given of him here by Metastasio, on whose probity and good taste we may rely, assigns him an honourable station among composers whose abilities rest only on tradition, though his productions may never have penetrated into this country.

which has not been inserted in the poet's correspondence published at Nice, but appears in Sig. Saverio Mattei's *Memoirs*, which, though short, contain many curious anecdotes relative to our Lyric Bard's private life, that, previous to this publication, were not to be found elsewhere (*b*). A sketch of the life of the celebrated singer and actress, *Mingotti*, has already been given elsewhere, from her own mouth (*c*); but as this letter is not mentioned there, and is such an unequivocal testimony of the favour in which she stood with the poet in this early period of her celebrity, it seems to be connected with the preceding account of *Attilio*.

## LETTER XX.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE.

"SIGNORA *Regina Mingotti*, one of the principal ornaments of the vocal band at Dresden, being engaged at Naples in the

(*b*) *Memorie per servire alla vita del Metastasio raccolte da Saverio Mattei. Edizione prima. in colle. 1785.*

(*c*) *Present State of Music in Germany, &c. vol 1. Art. MUNICH.*

same rank, has not escaped the epidemic desire of being furnished with a letter from me to your excellency. This request, however, would have been fruitless, had she not most wickedly, and maliciously, hit upon the following expedient for vanquishing my well known repugnance to give way to such applications. When she left the court of Dresden, what does she do, but post away to Vienna; and without giving me the least previous notice of my danger, early one fine morning, presents herself in my room, and in a military habit, preceded only by her fame, and accompanied by all the graces of youth, vivacity, and talents, and what is still worse, entitled to the chief credit of the success of my *Attilio* in Dresden. Now tell me, madam, with your usual candour, if ever you heard of so cunning a musical trick? It was like putting a knife to the throat of a poor christian. I know not ~~not~~ what Socrates, Cato, or Ariftides would have done in such a case; but this I know, that I could not help writing the letter, and even devoutly thanking Heaven that she had the moderation to limit her pretensions to a letter only.

This

This letter has no date, but it must have been written in 1751, when *Attilio* was first represented at Naples: as a letter written that year by the poet, to the same princess, to repress the too sanguine expectations of his first patroness, for the success of this opera, appears in Sig. Mattei's Memoirs, which is the more curious, as it contains Metastasio's opinion of the talents of the admirable tenor singer, *Raaff*, then young, and whose fame like that of *Mingotti*, was scarcely fledged.

## LETTER XXI.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE,

THOUGH my *Regulus* is an opera, of which I am the least ashamed; and though my dear *Raaff* is such a performer as cannot be paralleled; I believe that they are not made for each other, and that, joined together, they will both be sacrificed. That is to say, the part of *Regulus* will ruin my poor *Raaff*, and *Raaff* will be the ruin of the part, and of the opera. This drama cannot succeed, unless the principal personage pleases extremely; and our dear *Raaff* is physically

unable to support this weight. The reasons are numerous, founded on experience; and I hope that your excellence will believe a man who venerates you, and esteems *Raaff* as much as he merits, that is to say, excessively.—Besides, that immense space in the great theatre of *San Carlo*, will absorb all those inimitable graces, and that wonderful agility, which render this charming singer so admirable in a room: indeed he has split upon this rock elsewhere, in theatres three times less spacious than this; so that I can hardly hope that he will share a better fate in future.

---

The event, however, to the great joy of Metastasio, did not correspond with his expectations; the incomparable *Raaff* having overcome every obstacle; and the predictions of the Princess of Belmonte, were better verified than those of the poet; who by the firm confidence which the princess placed in the abilities of *Raaff*, began to doubt of the rectitude of his own judgment, before the opera was brought on the Neapolitan stage: and anticipating his defence in another letter on the subject to the same princess, he says, “wherever my matchless *Raaff* can be heard,

heard, he will doubtless ravish the hearts of all the audience; but if the size of this theatre is so enormous as it has been described to me, it is impossible to imagine that the exquisite delicacy of his taste and expression will not be lost, and in short, all the wonderful and peculiar graces of his style of singing. You, madam, will say, that there is no reasoning against facts: and I shall reply, that men are obliged to reason, but not to prophesy; particularly about theatrical matters, as they often elude all prudence and conjecture, and less frequently disgrace mistakes, than credit predictions."

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